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JOAN OF ARC

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JOAN OF ARC

By JOSEPH DELTEIL

Translated from the French by MALCOLM COWLEY

MINTON, BALCH & COMPANY
NEW YORK 1926

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I DEDICATE THIS WORK OF LOVE

TO SIMPLE SOULS

TO FOND HEARTS

TO CHILDREN, VIRGINS, ANGELS . . .

J. D.

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PREFACE

I love Joan of Arc. This is my principal reason for writing her Life, and there is none other required. Probably I am the only man who can understand this child today. She is as near to me, as natural as a sister. I searched through the desert of archæology, and there I found her standing, fresh and splendid before my eyes. Neither the dust of History nor the desiccating breath of Time can steal her living colours and her smile of flesh. No, she is not a legend, she is not a mummy. As for documents and local colour, may the devil carry them off! I intend only, in this book, to describe a daughter of France.

My Joan of Arc is a girl of eighteen.

J. D.

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INTRODUCTION

Delteil's first recognition came from the younger writers, the writers of the Left. I remember the occasion; it was in the spring of 1923, and we were perambulating through Paris with the crowd of quick-tempered, extremely gifted young men who had been Dadaists, and would presently become Superrealists; for the moment they had no name. They met, with their wives and hangers-on, in the glittering cafés of the Right Bank. One of this group—it was Louis Aragon—began to read from a novel which had just been published; something about the White Russian Army that had embarked from the eastern tip of Asia; the horses drowned in a crimson sea; the young woman on horseback who halted at the apex of the eastern promontory, her sword in her hand, her back to the setting sun;—all very barbarous, imaginative, and lyrical, and new. The book was *Sur le*

fleuve Amour; the author was Joseph Delteil. Malicious people compared him to "a Paul Morand gone mad," but they were mistaken. Morand himself was among the first to acknowledge the appearance of a thoroughly original talent.

Nobody expected the book to be popular; it was. Delteil resigned the position he held, with a bank or post-office, somewhere in the South, and came to Paris. My friends described him as a little man with a huge moustache and an abominable Southern accent; the sort who talks of "vingue sous" and "un bong coing de pays." They said that a thousand Delteils could be seen on the streets of Montpellier, Béziers or Toulouse; also that he was a genius. He joined their meetings and signed their manifestos. Later his picture appeared in *la Revue Surréaliste.*

He continued to write novels. *Choléra* appeared late in 1923. In respect to its popular success, it followed the same formula as *Sur le fleuve Amour;* that is, a cautious publisher; a small edition; a chorus of praise from people who thought they were discovering an author

of their own, an author they admired intensely, but nobody else could possibly like; finally more editions, more editions. *Choléra* was an extraordinary book; still, I did not like it so well as his first novel. *Les Cinq Sens* appeared in 1924, and *Jeanne d'Arc* in 1925.

If Delteil tried to be popular, his success would be easier to explain. However, there is nobody less concerned with pleasing his public. He says what he thinks, with malice and gusto; and the French critics are both irritated and enthusiastic. Fundamentally they agree with him. It is not so much that he represents the spirit of the younger Frenchman since the war; he *is* that spirit. A vast weariness with the ratiocination, the profound æsthetics of the last generation. A departure from realism, idealism, naturalism; all are equally boring. A revolt in favour of lyrical freedom and the imagination. Finally a taste for adventure, action. "Action will always upset the finest house of cards. As for these sages, men of law and thinkers; all these clever people: —chance in the form of a kick sends them off to the devil."

One might also mention the revolt of the individual against a standardized society. The author is the individual in question. He asserts his personality; he becomes the principal character in his own novels. I do not mean that they are autobiographical; quite on the contrary. But the author is always entering, arranging, interjecting, singing his own songs, voicing his own opinions. This applies to all of Delteil's novels, with the single exception of "Joan of Arc."

And yet it opens like his other books; that is, with an admirable outburst of lyricism in which the author counts for much, the characters for little. However, as he proceeds, he falls slowly in love with his heroine. She is indeed the most appealing character in all history; nobody could escape her charm, least of all Delteil. And from chapter to chapter she grows, develops, while the author recedes into the background. One comes to understand the admirable simplicity of his preface. "I love Joan of Arc. This is my principal reason for writing her Life, and there is none other required."

The public reception of the book was mixed and sensational. First, with many abusive letters, the Superrealists read him out of their party. Second among the objectors were the practical men, the positivists, the disciples of Anatole France. They believed that Joan's character could be fully explained by a few medical terms: hysteria, neuroticism, arrested development. Delteil abused them roundly, and they replied in kind. Third, and loudest of all, the professional patriots. They liked to think of Joan as an epitome of all the negative virtues: unselfish, quiet, sweet, resigned, unworldly, slender; a plaster Saint, a cardboard valentine. However, most of the critics and the mass of the public were delighted by Delteil's conception; they read and praised; the book climbed swiftly from edition to edition. My own copy belongs to the twenty-ninth; it was printed in November, about a month before the book received the *Prix Fémina*. Probably by now it has reached the fiftieth or sixtieth edition; the figure is unimportant; it only matters that people recognized its worth.

Two features of the book should certainly

be mentioned in advance. The first is the use of anachronisms: the singing of the Marseillaise and the Carmagnole; the mention of potatoes, cornmeal, chocolate, Brie cheese and a hundred other objects unknown to France during the fifteenth century. All these mistakes are deliberate. Delteil, as he says, despises documents and local colour; moreover, he is trying to revivify his heroine. She is a girl of eighteen, a girl of France, "in silk stockings, wearing a *cloche*. . . . She is a stenographer, or perhaps a shop-girl at the *Galeries Lafayette*. She leaves her home; she commands the French armies; she conquers Europe and Asia. This is the true Joan of Arc."

The second feature is that Delteil's view is substantially correct. He has caught the spirit of his heroine. Sometimes he is false to facts, but he is true to history.

His French is extraordinary, and difficult to translate. It is not book French. Book French is a dry and almost international language; it can be rendered word for word into book English. Delteil writes in the vernacu-

lar, in the rich idiom of the people; perhaps his French might be compared to Carl Sandburg's English. There is a difference, however, between comparing and identifying. In respect to syntax, his prose is almost as far from any English as from Hebrew or Chinese.

There is a good deal of slang in the book, but most of it I rendered into dictionary terms. Slang almost never gives the same impression in another language. There is no French equivalent for the cat's whiskers, and nothing in English which renders *je m'en fous*. For the rest, I endeavoured to preserve the rhythm, the vigorous images and the beauty of the original. "Joan of Arc" is the type of book which will always be new: a lyrical novel, a novel written by a poet, with a poet's grasp of sensuous objects, a poet's sympathy, a poet's freshness. Every poet is a brand-new phenomenon. Delteil, among contemporary French poets, is very nearly the best.

M. C.

February 20, 1926.

CHAPTER I

Baby

JOAN OF ARC

CHAPTER ONE

Baby

JOAN came into the world on a galloping horse. The stork which brought her turned out to be an eagle. Already, nine months before her birth, the meagre laws and ordinances of creation were seized with vertigo. She took form, as cities are taken, by assault. The evening of her incomparable conception was sweet with the sound of Easter bells, and all the firmament was filled with Love. There was Life in the air!

But listen to the words of the good chronicler, Perceval de Boulainvilliers:

"Joan was born at sunrise on the day of Epiphany. In all the lands of the earth, there

were miracles to announce her coming. The inhabitants of her own village fell into inestimable transports: the women tore their neckerchiefs for joy and all the young men together vowed their undying faith to the stars. A cat miaowed in the gutters of the church. The wind smelt of milk. And, for the space of two hours, fantastic roosters could be heard to flap their wings, and perching on heaps of feathers to chant in chorus: *Co-co-ri-co . . . co-co-ri-co!*"

The one room of the cottage was low and irregular; its walls were daubed with smoke and reeked of cabbage. All the furniture was rectangular. A row of blackened beams served as the sky. An oil lamp was burning like a soul. Everywhere, on chairs or stools, scattered over the floor, were huge pieces of white linen; perhaps a little straw. Women with their fingers on their lips. Mystery, mystery, mystery. . . .

Outside, it was the black hour before the dawn. The star Algol came stealing through the window. The machinery of the celestial

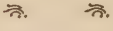
spheres was being oiled to maintain its accustomed rhythm. Oil, oil, unguents! Domrémy was dreaming. The dull mooing of cattle rose from the stables, muffled in hay. A cowbell ruminated against a milky beard. A dog barked, twisted like a tail. And these roosters, always . . .

Joan was born in a bird's cry. Life came to meet her, bearing a white cloth. A vast echo, in the background, of maternal sighs. The pain that mothers bear, how mild it is, and blessed, and how sweet!

Immediately the room grew younger. A spruce-wood fire, straight as a spruce tree, began to flame and crackle on the hearth. A huge bowl of mulled wine, blossoming with lemons and spices, foamed and laughed on the table. An odour of cheese and mystery filled the air. Suddenly women burst into chatter, as if in joy at having found their tongues. Linen passing from hand to hand made long corridors of whiteness. A slow dispersion of impurities. O humble magic and solemn grace of Birth!

Already the midwife was lifting the child, naked in her outstretched arms. The neighbour women pressed nearer while she cried:

"A maid!"



O rosy little nebula still lost in space, still formed of ether and already flesh, O mass of life trembling in all your albumina, body of hydrogen drunk with condensation, sweet milligrams of plasma ravished from the imponderable All, structure reared from the depths of the Centuries, lines emanating from the great Whole, O child of man, the flower of his sin, the sign of his immortality!

Yes, body that still is bodykin, flesh that is still incarnadine, child that is only the promise of a child, but already a creature in every essential:—divided between Mind and Matter, accessible on every side to Assimilation, soul dyed with blood and already the eternal woman, already Being and already Life!

What! has nobody thought of considering Joan in her earliest state, her source of flesh?

And has nobody understood that she is pre-eminently the Child, or that the Child is a human being in the pure state? Hypnotized by a suit of armour, her biographers have omitted the essential, which is the simultaneous budding, the parallel growth of body and soul in the mould of nature. Now certainly the strongest, the surest roots of man are those which plunge into the soft baby veins.

For my part it is in your cradle, Joan, that I prefer to seek the guideposts of your life; and in your natural childhood that I place the reason, and the basis, and the meaning of your supernatural grandeur.

Baby is three months old and has grown like a weed. She is baptized already. They call her Joan.

The day being sunny and warm, her mother has carried her into the barnyard and laid her on a heap of straw, in the sun.

She is white and smiling, gorged with milk and sky. The cottage where she was born smiles back at her, with its walls of rough

pink sandstone and its roof of thatch. Out of the sheepfold, the cowstable and the donkey stalls, there rise a thousand palpable murmurs: the noises of wooden shoes, of happy horns, of warm wool, of long ears. The farmyard is bursting with odours, and the heavy perfume of the dunghill climbs straight into the sky.

Joan breathes deeply, filling her nostrils with the incense of nature, nourishing herself with all the saps of the earth and the fruits of the air. Chickens come and go without noticing the child; they cackle and peck in the straw. Thirty-three chickens are shining in the sun. Joan herself is as small as a chicken; Joan is a little hen. But her eyes, the little flirt, are all for the rooster, the green fantastic fowl that is booted with azure and crested with the dawn.

It will be months before she learns to talk; still, in the language of the angels, she chatters with the rooster and the sun: two equilateral signs, two spheres of the same rank. With all her body she questions the shining machinery of the world; she questions and

gives orders, for today she is the queen of Creation. And she considers her subjects with an air of authority:—the fowls and planets, the farmhouse white as a dairymaid, her little friends the clouds and her retainers the great oaks.

The village of Domrémy, her own domain, lies stretched before her eyes. She need only lift a finger and she will cause the water of the Meuse to flow under the infinitesimal bridge, the cherry trees to blossom in the garden, the chimes to ring in the church. All natural phenomena are under her orders, and chance is a little page who marches in her train. For she does not doubt her power, and faith is the only reality.

She owns everything her eyes can see. Everything is conquest; everything hers by vested right. Her hands close on Rhines and Congos; her brain takes possession of the two poles; her wide-open mouth breathes in the goldfinches and barley fields, the wind and the Vosges. She is nourished by all the germinating seeds and all the ripened fruits. With every square inch of her skin, she enjoys her

kingdom. And eternal nature plays its part in her admirable diet.

There is never a wing in the blue firmament, never a mosquito humming over the waters, never a bit of millet or straw which fails to pay her tribute. Incommensurable phenomenon of osmosis! Solids and gases, saps and colours and perfumes, everything is drawn, everything hastens into the pores of this child. O marvel of marvels, incomparable exchange! Spontaneous gifts and free-will offerings! Minglings, assimilations and metamorphoses! Here is the very miracle of Transmutation! Here everything moves, glides, flies; everything is harmonized and everything takes form; everything palpitates and ripens; and in the end exists solely for Joan, for the epidermis of Joan, the eyes of Joan, the soul of Joan. Verily, Joan, the universe is yours this April day!

But in this month the evening winds are quick to freshen. Come, we must return to the house, little Joan. What, crying already?

Ah! yes, in a moment there is no more sun, no more osmosis, no more universe. But don't be afraid, we're taking care of you. See how the sun grows liquid in a breast; see how your mother nurses you, and see how a drop of milk replaces all your universe!

Hymn to Milk

O Milk, Milk with a capital M, capital Milk from goat or cow, O mother's Milk, quintessence of rotundity and principle of whiteness, majestic and marmorean Milk, supreme in nourishment, supremest speculation, the harmony of kisses and of love, the mildest syllables of life, Milk, milky, mellifluous, memorable joys of the tongue and palate, smile of satisfaction, source of beginnings, ocean of benevolence, treasures beyond compare, O Milk which pourest forth thy bounty even into the manna and the meadow, mild, magnificent, omnipresent Milk, navel of matter, heart of the body, essential formula and summary of physics:—glory and dithyramb to thee, O Milk!

Joan has gorged herself with milk.

They have carried her into her cradle and tucked the covers under her chin. Softly the wicker basket is rocking back and forth, rocking and droning a lullaby of ants and sidereal bodies. There she is lying, in her swaddling clothes and safety pins, her eyes half-closed, aching with milk and linen, divine and tired. Are you classical or romantic, Joan; or should I call you cubist, dadaist, superrealist? For, watching the handles of the cradle, high above your head, you compare them mentally to the revolving planets and the orbit of the heart.

Towards all the elements which compose the world, your attitude is naïve and surprising, ah! little daughter of Pascal, and possibly your chief amusement is to observe the boldest exploits of the mind. I can detect the birth of delicate spiritual forces, and already the noises of digestion are mingled in your body with the germinating seeds of thought. Man is one being, brain and bowels. And here, baby, is the first great lesson you have taught.

Hush! Joan is sleeping. She lies in the

midst of banality and chaos, while the splendour of her young flesh fills the room. The wicker cradle has woven a golden aureole for her head. The tip of the mattress is a thick sanctified cloud. Her tongue moves strangely across the half-open lips, her white, sugary, circumferential tongue, sticky with saliva. An atmosphere of warmth and roses! Rich grace! Her eyes are closed hermetically, but the quality of her lashes defies the subtlest syllogism. Still charged with spiritual emanations, her breath rises in a pale cloud, and dances over her cheeks with the touch of humming birds or silk. And her little nostrils, carved from mother-of-pearl, are contracting in their delicate perfection. A drop of rheum shining at the corner of each eye; in the hollow of every dimple a speck of dirt. But even the least details are purified by the glowing health of her cheeks, and over the whole floats the bloom of childhood. Joan is sleeping, a little dirty, swollen with life.

She sleeps, and now she dreams, and this is her dream:

"A Beast of huge size is eating the sun.

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His great spider-legs go in zigzags from one cloud to another, through the gelatine of the spheres. Suddenly, from the crest of heaven, the Beast swoops down on Joan; his eyes are blood-shot and full of mice. Joan is riding a white cow in the center of a battlefield of milk. The beast flounders in the milk, spattering milk on all the surrounding meadows. Joan slashes and thrusts; her eyes are muskets. Little by little the Monster gives way; he overturns in whiteness, he sinks into the milk. . . . And Joan awakens, victorious. in a cradle. . . ."

When she was seven months old, her first tooth appeared. Joan was feverish; she suffered from worms; there was a touch of enteritis and severe diarrhœa; her eyelids turned purple. Finally her gums cracked. The first tooth!

Her mother, dazzled with admiration, considered the tooth gravely. It was indeed a marvellous substance, formed of milk and dreams, shining and sweet, graceful and

strong, cast in an archangel's mould. Her father, the neighbour women, the dog and the pigeons ran hastily to offer their admiration to this tooth. It would seem that humanity had just increased its forces.

The first tooth! Yes, it is an event to be regarded solemnly, a date in the history of man. A tooth gives life its veritable meaning. Until the tooth appeared, the child was something foreign and ideal, something to be conjectured, an angel still. But a tooth signifies *strife*, because it signifies *to eat*. The basis of life is nourishment, and the basis of nourishment is strife. In order to put something between their teeth, men slay and women sin. The tooth is at the origin of war and prostitution, of evil and of death. The first tooth: ah, what a serious topic you have proved to be, and how deep are the mother's reasons for watching you with overflowing emotion and not a little terror!

Already the evidences of humanity have multiplied. There is no longer a chance to go

back, into the realm of the larva. The wind of the race is driving you, child, into the paths of humankind. Soon Joan will be taking her first step. O majesty of the first step, the memorable marvel of standing upright! See how this being which existed only in a horizontal state, the posture of the mineral kingdom, lying in contact with and servitude to the soil:—see how it leaps into vertical freedom, see how it stands, its feet on eternal Earth, its head toward heaven!

Child, child from every quarter the symbols of your destiny draw near. You have hardly begun to walk alone, and now you are making sounds; already you covet the Word. Syllables fall from your lips, my dear, in a great labial deluge, and they evoke the birth of a noble universe from the breast of immemorial chaos. The vowels and consonants are choosing their rightful places in your body. Your tongue and larynx are gaining consistency and meaning. Already you express yourself, and I have found nothing more diffi-

cult, dear child, than to express myself. The Word is in you, and the Word is made flesh, and your flesh is made Word!

Hymn to the Word

O word, tetragrammatic and quadrangular Word, assizes of the thought and framework of the mind, instrument of measure and precision, distribution and articulation of the idea, foundry and mould of the spirit, attempt to group and unify, essay in harmony, material and volatile Word, spatial and temporal Word, endowed with physical worth and moral sense, smooth words and haughty words, O Word . . . from your shoulders I suspend all the strings of my voice, and at your altar consecrate the members of my body!

CHAPTER TWO

Life in Bulk

CHAPTER TWO

Life in Bulk

JOAN is a girl of twelve, a red little daughter of Lorraine. With her Rhine-green eyes, her wine-red lips and the great thatch of carrot-coloured hair that tumbles in strands down her neck, she has every quality proper to rouse the enthusiasm of the very best authors. The structure of her simple body, sprung straight from the soil, is one which replies to the fundamental laws of life. The principle of utility has enlarged and fecundated the bold lines of her flesh. Her thick calves are intended not to draw the eye, but to support a solemn edifice. Each of her members appreciates the importance of its rôle, and each of her cells collaborates in the solution of the problem. This child of nature uses her five senses in the most legitimate fashion, by which I mean the most direct. To hear with

the ears, to see with the eyes: at any epoch of the world's history, the possession of these faculties indicates a certain originality.

Joan is a big French country girl, a mingling of the fleshly and the divine. Health and good sense; a plump skin and a keen mind.

And her glance, how sturdy beneath the tawny lashes! The abundance of her life is swelling all her body: her cheeks which seem daubed with blood, her brand-new throat and her dirt-frescoed ears. Joan is grimy and fresh and sweet as a bird-pecked pear.

The d'Arc family was gathered round the table. In Lorraine the meals are simple and coarse. Apples form their basis:—apples of the earth and apples of the air. What a pity that poets waste their eloquence on Funeral Odes, instead of hymning the virtues of living flesh and, to be more specific, instead of reciting an Ode to the Apple! The earth-apple, or potato, is an eminently intellectual vegetable; it makes the mind nimble, clears

the most obstinate stomachs, and breeds a taste for conversation. As for the veritable apples of the air, they contain the principal acids necessary for digestion. They stimulate bodily vigour and are propitious to youth.

And so their Lorraine diet consisted chiefly of apples, potatoes and milk. There was no lack of smoked pork. Sometimes, on holidays, a fowl or a bunch of grapes, and always a huge loaf of wheat or barley bread.

Joan was serving at the table. The soup tureen was steaming; the air was heavy with blossoming leeks and chaste vegetables. Soup fell with all its weight into empty stomachs. As a sort of cocktail, the stench of cows came drifting from the stable.

Next, Joan brought on a pewter dish, heaped with boiled potatoes and slices of pork. She ate with gravity. Eating was an almost sacred task, a mysterious function. Besides, she had a tremendous appetite. Would it be just to say that appetite, in the most general sense of the word, was Joan of Arc's supreme virtue? Appetite, appetency, desire. Analogy of the internal and external;

alliance of man with the universe! In order to assure the continuity of creation, the vital fluids of all the world hasten into our digestive tracts. Here is the absolute communion of Matter and of Mind!

Boiled chestnuts came next; then finally a dish of *millas*, which is a sort of brown pudding, made of Indian meal.

The youngsters giggled and pinched each other under the table. Dog and cat had Homeric disputes. The clatter of dishes broke the minutes. Father d'Arc was a solid block of content, and a just joy enlivened the whole of this profound family. Everything in their cottage breathed simplicity, ease, nitrogen and strength. They emptied huge goblets of water, one after the other. Water has infinite virtues. Perhaps vegetarianism is only a joke, but in general, with a joke, one should break the shell and seize the precious kernel. There is always a kernel of truth in men and things; and this particle of life is agreeable, even marvellous to discover. All water has extraordinary qualities, and this is especially true of Domrémy water; I have tested it my-

self. It has the virtue of moderation, as well as certain laxative qualities, which were not without a favourable influence on Joan of Arc's constitution. Many of her characteristics—the freshness of her skin, the simplicity of her genius—may safely be attributed to the Domrémy water.

When the meal was over, Joan left the house, carrying an earthen pot in her hand. It was time to water the cows. She crossed the barnyard; it was reeking with animals, cooing with pigeons, quacking with ducks. All the sun's rays had fallen asleep on a pile of straw. The dunghill was laughing and singing in its pool of liquid muck. Ah! divine odour of manure, strong natural exhalations, joy of gases and alkalis, healthy manure, ah! heartiest of the hearty! You aid in the noblest functions of the body. Your odours are eminently propitious to the enrichment of the skin. A strangely robust energy rises from your smoking flanks, and I am told that no perfume is more salubrious than yours. (Here the Faculty of Medicine nods all its academic bonnets in approval.) You are the true vil-

lage pharmacopœia, O dunghill, and who can count the ailing lungs which you have served to disinfect? For you are a quintessence of herbs and simples; and painstaking analysis shows you to be Rothschildishly rich in constitutional principles!

Joan breathed in the oily perfume of the dunghill with open nostrils. Rich waves of life were penetrating her body through all its pores. And her every organ, without her knowledge, was engaged in the gravest physical occupations. She was all submission to the good laws of nature; indeed, I feel that she was the guilty accomplice of every reflex, of every instinct. But she marched gaily ahead, without a care, among the dabbling ducks and ridiculous chicks. The whole of the animal kingdom, under the sun, was stirred into action by a great intestinal delight. Excited chickens were scratching the pestilence in flower. And Milord Rooster, his tail a blazing scarf, intoned a Rhapsody to Muck.

Joan watered the two cows, Praline and Bricole. Their necks expanded, as they drank, and their enormous eyes were buried in

the bucket. Joan stroked their horns, patted their muzzles, murmured endearments in an angel's voice. With the tips of her fingers she protected their huge bulks.

Then she untied Rusco, the donkey; clambered on his bare back and . . . gid-diap, gid-diap, whoa! . . . Like all country girls, Joan was an excellent rider. By dint of great slaps and digs and kicks, she forced the donkey to the watering trough.

Now it was time to drive the animals to pasture: the cows, the ducks, the donkey. All together they took a path which led behind the church. Crossing the Meuse on stepping stones, they followed a lane which zigzagged between clumps of gooseberry bushes; and so at last they reached the broad family pasture.

Immediately the eyes were seized with this immensity of verdure. The pupils dilated till they included all the hill. Ah! joy of greenery, green joy! Joan was bathed in a sea of grass from her eyelids to her soul. A sort of rhythm took possession of her feet and her heart. Infinite ease, infinite simplicity and infinite freshness were irradiated from these

dense herbaceous hills. The green of chlorophyl is the colour of death, richness, divinity. And certainly, if I can imagine Paradise, it is clad in neither gold nor blue, but all in green.

The cattle fell to grazing; the cowbells were mingled with the cowslips. Rusco, the donkey, went sliding off toward a clump of mirabelle-plums, the trees which bear the delicious mirabelles of Lorraine.

Joan sank down in the grass, and all her body made contact with the earth. Her breast against the humus, her eyes on the growing plants, her hands buried to the knuckles in sod, the divine girl was imbibing, from living matter, its infinitesimal saps and essential principles, the secret of flesh and the luxury of blood. She was lying in a state of relaxation which bordered on mysticism. Her body was half-incorporated in the very text of the Universe. Unspeakably happy, she sucked an oat-straw. She was all appeal, desire and gift; and every pore of her skin, every orifice of her body, seemed immensely open before the mystery of Life. . . .

Little by little, on the neighbouring hills, other bells began to tinkle and other cows to graze and dream. Behind a clump of apple trees, she could hear the laugh of Hauviette and Mengète. They were Joan's chums, friends of her own age and heart. She hailed them immediately.

They came at a trot, an apple between their teeth, their hair in sticky disorder. Stout reddish chunks of girls, morsels of humanity still roughly hewn, machines without polish, life in bulk. . . .

They chattered, laughed, played games. All three of them turned somersaults in the grass to the sound of cowbells. The echoes were playing in the breeze. Perhaps the donkey began to bray. Domrémy shone in the distance. . . .

But suddenly they heard the evening Angelus. The three little maids stopped to gather their wits. Then they knelt in the open meadow, one beside the other, facing the setting sun. And in clear voices, under the empty firmament, against a background of hay and cows and sky, they declined the fresh-

est prayer in all the world, the angelic Salutation:

"Good evening, Lady Mary! Your cheeks are full of grace. You are the luckiest of women: the Lord is your lover! And how sweet is your baby, the fruit of your womb, Jesus. . .!"

CHAPTER THREE

Dauphin! Dauphin!

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Dauphin! Dauphin!

DOMRÉMY was loyal to the French party.

The Treaty of Troyes (1420) left France in the hands of the English. Henry V of England, invested by the treaty, master of Paris and all the lands to the north of the Loire, recognized by the Duke of Burgundy and his powerful Flemish and Picard vassals, seemed by law, and was in fact, the real king of France. The other, the Dauphin Charles de Valois, a wavering and feeble prince, uncertain of his own legitimacy,* despairing of the future, dragged out his life in meagre pleasures on the banks of the Loire. He was called in derision "the King of Bourges." He had almost nothing on his side: only the naked

* Charles VI had gone mad; his wife, Isabeau of Bavaria, proved notoriously unfaithful; and the English claimed that the present Dauphin, Charles VII, was not his son.

truth and a few peasant girls, justice and Joan of Arc.

The whole valley of the Meuse, around Domrémy, was divided between the two factions of France and Burgundy. Every town, every village, made conscientious choice of its lord and faith. Between rival neighbourhoods, war raged endemically. The people of Domrémy were French; those of Marcey, the adjoining village, were Burgundian. In that century the enemy was not a myth, a distant cause, a general idea; but a physical reality visible to the naked eye and palpable to the hand. For Domrémy, the enemy was Marcey.

From time to time there were skirmishes or marches of armed bands to preserve the atmosphere of war. By the fireside in the evening, roused by the exaggeration of the great flames, the peasants would describe massacres, depredations, scenes of pillage. Burned villages and ruined churches would pass and repass in the wind of imagination. The men attacked Marcey with oaths like blows. The women, their spinning wheels silent and their breasts heaving, would dream by the fire. The chil-

dren were huddled at one corner of the hearth, withering in the heat of fear and ashes.

Joan, every evening, would listen fiercely to these tales. Her body, glutted with the oxygen of the day, would abandon itself in the shadow to deliriums and phantoms. Distinctly she could see the troops of Englishmen, Normans and Burgundians trampling the prostrate body of France. Her eyes would begin to roll, little by little, and her soul would redden with anger. She crunched the name of Marcey between her teeth.

An old man of sixty, tall and lame, was bending forward till his mouth shone with the fire. He began to speak in pompous terms of Philip the Good. Then somebody mentioned the Dauphin Charles. A few of the men complained of his indifference, his soft and idle life. But the women were faithful, remembering his miserable fate and his kingdom sold at auction. Some of them mentioned the ugliness of his body, and others, being more tender, allowed him all the graces of the heart. Would he finally be dethroned, forced to take refuge in Scotland, perhaps beheaded? . . .

Joan at this moment, from the corner of the hearth, broke into sobs. Everybody turned and watched her sympathetically. One of the women asked:

"Why are you crying, Joan?"

She replied in a clear voice:

"Because I love the King!"

And so, between Domrémy and Marcey, hate was always brewing. Sometimes it would explode into a pitched battle over cattle or women. A few blows with a pitchfork at the edge of a wood; then everything returned to order. Being reasonable, and occupied with their toil, the grown men rarely went further than jeers or insults; theirs was a war of tongues. But the children were kept in a state of exaltation by stories heard at the chimney corner; and with spirits more prompt to action, they would organize veritable military expeditions between the two villages.

The Domrémy children had proved the more ardent, and Joan was one of their leaders. Violent by temperament; her gestures

naturally sharp and commanding; bold in her carriage and with fire in her eyes, she enjoyed a great prestige among the boys and girls of her own age. Being strong and quick-tempered, she did not disdain to enforce her authority with her fists. She proved extremely adroit in rough-and-tumble fighting, and several of her friends carried the marks of her wrath. In addition, she possessed a quick imagination and the sense of strategy. She was the one who made the plans for attack. To act as general in the long grass: this was her School of War.

On the given day, her forces assembled at the North Gate:—twenty youngsters, half of them boys, half girls, all of them wearing red or blue blouses and wooden shoes. The morning air was sharp, and the smaller girls were whistling into their black fingers. The older boys were armed with slings and clubs. They strutted, these heroes in miniature, before the ladies and the cold. Others, red to the ears, were blowing into their handkerchiefs. A few would stop to drink a drop of kirsch from their pewter flasks. The girls were loaded down

with knapsacks and bandages; the simpler spirits were carrying bombs in the shape of mirabelles or potatoes. Great laughter was impending like a storm, and there was pure blood in every vein. The young generals marched up and down, carrying huge stable-whips. The dawn smelled of powder and milk.

Joan called the roll. Then, in silence, they began their march toward Marcey. They chose a path through the fields, to the left of the highway, so as not to attract the attention of their elders. Man is always the principal enemy of the child.

They marched in single file, follow-the-leader, among the tall weeds. Their air was innocence itself, and the little girls in particular displayed their profound talent for dissimulation. Sainted hypocrisy paraded through these fields. The sharp air was lashing their cheeks and brains. Their muscles were stimulated by the walk. Little by little these children, set free in the midst of nature, abandoned themselves to their original freedom; mingling the ridiculous with the divine,

the instinct of strife with the love of flowers, laughter with fear. The boys who loved teasing would pinch the calves of the little girls, furtively. Others would hunt blackbirds, rush off in wild races across the fields, trade buttons for tops.

Suddenly a runny-nosed brat of twelve proclaimed, in his pink voice:

"And remember—No quarter!"

They crossed the Meuse by leaping from stone to stone. On the opposite bank, they stopped to lay in their provision of pebbles. The little girls, who served as munition caissons, filled their knapsacks and their aprons. The boys stuffed their pockets. And the little army marched on, heavy with hate and projectiles.

Soon they came in sight of Marcey. They were now crawling on all fours, quarrelling over the knees or elbows which pushed into the way. Joan and a few other leaders drew apart to hold a council of war. The final preparations for the attack were made in the shelter of a crumbling wall, smelling of mint, with flowers growing in the cracks between the

stones. A few bees, disturbed by the battle, flew off angrily, covered with golden pollen. Somewhere in the distance a cuckoo sang.

Yonder, a hundred yards away was Marcey, Burgundian Marcey, terraced on the slopes of a hill. The flat houses were rooted in good soil. Great chunks of walls; fresh roofs washing themselves in the first rays of the sun; straight old gateways; the sound of cattle, women and birds; the tinkle of water in a crack between two stones, and above all this a colonnade of blue smoke rising:—the village! The village, a perfect entity, breathed out through all its chimneys. Everything was calm, motionless, natural and divine. . . .

Meanwhile the assailants were still approaching, crawling on their bellies, hiding themselves behind tree-trunks, prickly hedges or broken walls. Instructions passed from mouth to mouth; and low, sharp orders were hissed among the weeds. Holding their slings in their clenched teeth, digging their nails into the soil, keeping their eyes on the level of the horizon, crawling and spying they pressed on.

Suddenly a little red dog, having caught

the scent, appeared at the edge of the village. He stopped, sniffed the wind, and began to give little barks, lamentably, with his tail between his legs. He came forward slowly, alarmed by the suspicious silence, his ears up, his nose in the grass. . . .

The children stopped, holding their breath.

Joan gave an order:

"In God's name, choke him! And not a sound!"

One of the boys gave a leap, flung his arms round the cur and buried its bark in his clothes. Two fragile hands were gripping its throat with extraordinary ferocity. There was power enough in this embrace to strangle a lion. One would think that the future of all civilization depended on choking this dog. It gave two hoarse rattles, three convulsive shivers, then stiffened for eternity. A little pale thing lying in a vague somewhere. . . .

But too late; his yelps had already given the alarm. One by one, furtively, the youngsters of Marcey appeared at a window, an alley, a street-corner. Two or three boys in their teens came down the road with short

steps, fearing an ambush. Prudence, essentially a virtue of Lorraine, was glued to their feet. Timid or questioning glances passed from one to another.

Suddenly a volley of pebbles crashed about their ears. They turned and scampered off, roaring like warriors or calves.

Now everything disappeared. There was a long moment of silence and immobility. The adversaries were invisible, one to the other, but strange movements could be imagined in the depths. One felt that new forces were streaming from the centre of Marcey:—bands of ragged boys, groups of girls to carry ammunition. The enemy began to assemble in the shelter of a burned wall, to complete their preparations.

Soon Marcey opened fire. Their slings cut the air in short arcs, and their pebbles rained in a shower. The Marcey stones were sharper, with jagged edges; fragments of sandstone chipped from buildings or boulders. The Domrémy pebbles, polished by the Meuse, were of tender colours; they had more grace, as well as greater ballistic virtues.

The bombardment lasted a quarter of an hour or longer; and the projectiles were accompanied with taunts, jeers, and generally with little damage. From time to time a champion would spring to his feet behind the barricade, brandish his sling, then disappear like a jack-in-the-box. The Marcey children, seeing their ammunition giving out, began to economize their pebbles. They were now throwing all sorts of heterogeneous missiles: clods, broken bottles, walnuts, dried manure . . .

Suddenly, as if by common accord, there was a strange lull. Not an urchin, not a pebble to be seen. Peace, the great peace of nature, seemed lovelier than ever before. A cool little wind was breathing among the mirabelle trees. The crows, blanched with sunlight, became a favourable omen. An iron weathercock, on the church steeple of Marcey, went marauding among the clouds. There were peasants in the distant fields, engaged in their interminable tasks. The bleating of sheep could be heard from the slopes of the hills. Everything was clear and simple and pure. Everything exhaled joy, feathers, ani-

mals and fruits. The world revolved in its grace and its sleek splendour. . . .

And this was the moment when Marcey rose to the attack. They were crying like peacocks, jumping like carps. All together, thirty young ruffians of quality, with bare feet and brick-red hair, their faces soiled with mud and hate, their blue blouses in rags, they bounded from walls and holes. They drew near in a cloud of breath, leaping high over the rocks, holding their clubs in the air. And they screamed into the faces of their foes, "Frogs! Dirty frogs! You steal sheep! You steal sheep!"

On their side, the Domrémy forces, after a last volley of pebbles, rushed forward to the cry of Dauphin! Dauphin! Joan was at their head. She slashed the air with great blows of her ox-whip, shouting with all the force of her lungs:

"Forward, forward! All is ours!"

The shock! For five minutes an inextricable mass of struggling bodies. Single combats, duels, hand-to-hand encounters. The warriors challenged each other, mingling in-

sults with cudgel-blows. Each chose his adversary and provoked him by dint of jeers. They circled round in pairs, feinted, struck sweeping blows with their clubs. Sometimes they broke their cudgels, and then they would fall to with fists and feet. If your enemy was a boy, poke out his eyes. A girl, tear out her hair. Fragments of words, splinters of wood went flying through the air, now heavy with sweat. A curse for every wound, a shout of joy for every groan. A few of the belligerents were sinking to the ground with broken tibias. The strongest took their post in the front rank, to protect the younger children and the munitions. The smaller girls, too weak to fight, were posted in the rear, passing forward the projectiles, watching the strategy of the opposing forces and giving warning of their blows.

"Joan . . . on the left . . . be careful!"

"Joan, look out for the big towhead!"

Joan was struggling with a square chunk of a Marcey boy, armed with a holly club. She drooled from the mouth; her hair was in her eyes; blood streamed from her nose, and her

blouse was torn from top to bottom. But she panted and struck: "There, you fat cow! Take this one, pig!" Her flannel undershirt, torn in shreds, revealed the lower half of her lovely throat. She was whirling her whip around her head, radiant with strength, gasping for very pleasure. . . .

Suddenly a pebble struck her on the forehead. She reeled under the pain, and nearly fell. Blood trickled down her eyelids. Two of her cronies came running to her assistance, and dragged her off to the rear.

And now, little by little, Domrémy began a general retreat. They withdrew slowly, carrying off the wounded, holding the enemy at a distance with volleys of stones. But Marcey was hardly in shape to pursue them. Each side was counting its bruises and its wounds. And all the while Domrémy continued the retreat, hobbling and limping, fighting still. These children were savage, apoplectic, disjointed and magnificent. One had his ears torn off; another had split his lip; still others were lamed, with blood streaming down their legs. A few had an arm in a sling, a

shoulder in a bandage, one eye hidden by a patch. All were panting noisily, in the abundance of their strength. Only a band of youngsters, but they retreated with the souls of men, proud of their spilt blood, glutted with joy and burning with thirst.

Before disappearing, they stopped to defy Marcey for the last time. They stood for a moment facing the enemy, then shouted with one voice:

"Hurrah for France!"

And they stuck out their tongues at Marcey.

They made their way back to Domrémy. On the bank of the Meuse, they smeared their faces with cold water, rinsed out their sores; and one beside the other, flat on their bellies along the bank, they drank like thirsty cattle.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Chums from Heaven

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The Chums from Heaven

JOAN had taken her cows to the pasture. She was lying on her back, in the shade of a mirabelle tree. It was the month of June, in 1414, and the day was warm.

All the surrounding hills, motionless under their firs and under the sun, dreamed and slept with abundance. They smelled of plums and grass and herds. The breeze was rocking gently in a wide sky. There was so much foliage that all the world had broken into a green rash.

Joan, her eyes half-closed, was watching the mirabelles ripen among their shiny leaves. Her eyes felt raw and sugary, like fruit. She lay half-melted in the sultry air.

Suddenly, from the vault of heaven, a woman began to descend from cloud to cloud. Sprung out of space and wind, moulded from

mist and dream, she came gliding through the roses and gilt of the morning. She seemed to be falling, allowing herself to fall, through the heavy air in accordance with the law of universal attraction; and her distant eyes considered Joan of Arc, in the foothills of the Vosges, lost in the depths of Lorraine. She approached at a speed proportional to the square of the distance, and soon she was floating over the meadow. Her vague form had grown more definite; her garments were taking colour. She halted above Joan's head, in the mirabelle tree, with her feet in the fork and her back resting against the larger branch.

Joan rubbed her eyes. Her heart was wildly thumping; her tongue was dry. She had fasted the day before, and her faculties were in a weakened state. All her breast was full of a great languor. She felt a little dizzy, with no defence against the heat or her own exhaustion. Moreover, for some time past she had been subject to fainting spells. She was now thirteen, and the phenomena of puberty were secretly moulding her flesh. She thought of pinching herself to see if her vision were

real. Her veins were insensible; there was sand in her legs. And she could feel her breath growing rough and soft like pigeons' feathers in the spring.

But the Apparition cried, in a young and rosy voice:

"Joan, Joan, fear nothing. God has chosen you among the flowers of the world. And behold! He is sending you His daughters!"

Joan rose, vague and confused. The words from heaven had revived her senses and made her limbs elastic. She knelt before the mirabelle tree, and without a word she gazed on the Lady, "with her bodily eyes."

The Lady was a girl of fifteen, with orange hair and a very light complexion. Her bosom, moulded in a blue gown sprinkled with white stars, was full and generous. Standing nobly among the leaves, her arms bare to the elbows and a crown of mirabelles wreathing her high forehead, she smiled with a sly and tender air. She wore wooden shoes, like a peasant, and carried a little shawl of Lorraine wool over her shoulders. Her teeth shone like pebbles in the moonlight. Little freckles dotted

her fresh cheeks. Her firm breasts belonged to a daughter of the Vosges, and following the rhythm of her breath, they could be seen to rise before her, like two horizons.

Joan still was kneeling, overcome by the celestial vision. And the Lady continued:

"Be good, Joan. Be strong and love your King!"

Joan trembled. To love the King! To love the King! She stammered:

"I am only a poor girl. I watch my cows in the meadow, and tell my rosary on the bare ground. Lady, I am your servant."

But the Lady smiled more broadly. She plucked a mirabelle, and offering it to Joan, she said:

"Rise, Joan, and give me your hand. God has sent me to give you advice and mirabelles. Take and eat, for the fruit of the tree is the sign of health. Come, I am Saint Catherine, and here is my friend, Saint Margaret."

And she motioned to her left, where a second Lady was standing on another branch. Margaret was younger, even, than Catherine; indeed, she seemed scarcely thirteen. Her

breasts were smaller, her waist more slender, and she was dark as a snake. Her eyes shone with the brilliance and malice of virgins, and her legs were thin, like a child's. She was wearing a pink dress with white stars, and a hat of freshly woven straw. A pug-nosed urchin outlined against the skies. She smiled without a care in the world and, on the sly, began crunching mirabelles like a little glutton.

Joan rose and stretched out her hands toward the Saints. She had forgotten her fear. She examined the Ladies tranquilly. They resembled her chums of Domrémy. Now they began to stroke her head with their long, graceful fingers, and they laughed like violins. In her hair, Joan could hear celestial music.

Suddenly, noticing Margaret's greedy air, Joan trembled with embarrassment at having offered nothing to her friends. She murmured rapidly:

"If you like, I'll run and fetch you some cold ham, and some hard-boiled eggs . . . and maybe a drop of wine?"

But Margaret replied:

"I want neither wine nor meat, but I love milk and simple hearts."

At the same time she made a sign to one of the cows. Immediately the beast advanced, its udder swollen, its skin content. Saint Margaret knelt by its side and began milking eagerly. She gathered the milk in the hollow of her hand and gobbled it down.

Then the two Saints seated themselves in the grass beside Joan. They were now three happy little friends, speaking with simplicity about earthly and heavenly matters:—with great simplicity and a little passion. . . .

"Joan," said Saint Catherine, "God asks you to be a warrior maid and lead soldiers into battle."

"But I know nothing about soldiers, Catherine, and they make me tremble."

"Joan, God will take away your fear; He will give you a great charger, and He will send you against the English."

"I have never seen the English, Catherine. But everybody speaks great ill of them, and I fear they will do me harm."

"Joan, Joan, never fear the English. You

will cut them into little pieces and send them away in a great rout."

In the meantime Margaret had picked a daisy of the fields, and her eyes shining, she was plucking the petals slowly. She murmured in a low voice:

"He loves me with a great love . . . or small . . . madly . . . not at all . . . great . . . small . . ."

And all at once she sprang to her feet in disorder, crying:

"Madly! Madly!"

And the two Saints went soaring off, pathetically, side by side, clutching each other by the hand, and repeating through the clouds:

"Joan, Joan, take care. God loves you *madly!*"

On the morrow, and the day after the morrow, and all the following days, the Saints did not return. Each morning Joan inspected the horizon and the meadow, the thickets and the sky. In vain. Perhaps these celestial Powers had retreated to the Forest, the great Forest of the Vosges? Joan drove her cattle there.

The Forest, the Forest with a capital F, temple of leaves and birds, awful mystery, sea and sky, stronghold of fear and divinity. The Forest, for Domrémy, represented an unfathomable gulf, where old memories of sanguinary knights were mingled with the rites of witches and visions out of hell. The Forest, horrible entity:—tribes of owls and wolves, the shadowy dens of snakes, limitless and intangible spaces, walls on every side and outlets on every side, elastic dangers, closed shadows. The Forest, haunt of the Spruce and Solitude, of Water and of Wind!

Now, on that morning, Joan entered the forest with a clear and simple mind. Immediately, everything seemed lovable and gracious. All the eagles had changed to nightingales, and the water, mysterious water, was flowing in a stream of cool moss. The huge trunks of the spruces were warm as a baby's flesh; the shadow under the thickets was the green of new-mown hay. A great square of blue sky could be seen. The wind, in reality, was only a breeze, and smelt of watercress and love. A little rabbit—two ears bristling on a pair of

haunches—scampered gently away through the dry leaves. Here and there a squirrel's tail, or a blackbird's beak, or the tip of a weasel's snout. The forest, the forest with a small f, was crooning tenderly, like a young mother. And the air was so warm, the cows so musical, that Joan lay down under the friendly trees, while her soul and sensitive flesh fell into a doze. She slept, she dreamed. In her dream she saw her two chums, Catherine and Margaret. . . .

On the following day, the Saints reappeared. They crossed the meadow, walking arm-in-arm toward Joan, laughing like two little lunatics. (For I imagine that the saints are never bored in Paradise.)

When they came up to Joan, they bade her good day and kissed her, one after the other. And thereupon Saint Catherine showed her a strange iron ring, without ornament; and taking Joan's hand, she slipped it on her finger, saying:

"Joan, this ring is the Ring of France."

Then the Saints each flung an arm about her

waist, and all three went strolling through the meadow, all three so fair and sweet and pure, all three so much alike that nobody could tell which was Joan, which Catherine, and which Margaret.

It was Catherine who said:

"Joan, God commands you to go to the aid of the realm of France!"

Joan faltered:

"I can neither read nor write. I cannot ride a charger, nor lead the soldiers into battle."

"Joan, Joan, put away your doubts. Only doubt is fatal, and only boldness great. Faith is the first of all the virtues. It was in a day of boldness that God created the world. To act is a thousand times more admirable than to think. Joan, the greatest power of man is ignorance. And in politics, love or strategy, the greatest game is to ignore the rules of the game. The young generals of Napoleon, foolhardy and ignorant, young madmen of twenty-seven, will defeat the wisest captains of all the world. Always a grain of madness leavens the soul. A touch of simplicity conquers everything. There is only one category: the sub-

lime. Only a carpenter can become a Jesus; only a shepherd can be a Mistral or a Rodin. Joan, Joan, faith moves mountains and faith wins battles. The basis of every great work is passion and love. The heart is all that counts. Everywhere on earth, and everywhere in heaven, it is a question of the heart!"

. . . Go forth . . . She was overcome by the blank terror of these words. It was late in the night, but sleep refused to come. She began to meditate. . . . For five years, now, the Saints had been insisting. They came every week to talk of God and the King. They invoked "the great pity which is the realm of France." Joan was thinking—To go forth. . . . To leave her mother and her village, her cows and her friends, the flowering garden and the shady hill; to make herself the leader of soldiers, to shed blood. . . . Can it really be the will of God?

And suddenly she thought of the King. The King, a beloved figure. . . . Joan could never think of the King without pity for his misfor-

tunes. "Why are you crying, Joan?—Because I love the King!" The King. . . . The Saints had bade her gravely, "Love your King!" She was lying in her bed among the Vosges, and now she imagined the King in a faithful city. . . . He is a young man full of charm and folly. He wears doeskin shoes and robes of silk. He is unhappy under the blue skies of Touraine, and his eyes are shining with love and despair. . . . Joan was utterly lost in her dream. The sentimental vision caused strange waves of feeling to ripple through her body. She loved the King. Her flesh trembled to its depths. . . . Go forth? . . . "It is a question of the heart!" And now the King was smiling on her with his two-and-thirty golden teeth. His regal young breast bent over her couch. . . . He was beautiful! . . . And Joan, in consternation, cried:

"Go forth! Go forth! . . . I will. . . ."

CHAPTER FIVE

Lady-Errant

CHAPTER FIVE

Lady-Errant

JOAN was mounted on a horse; a bay-brown stallion of Picard blood, long in the legs and fiery in the mouth. He cost twelve francs, and was whinnying loudly in praise of oats. He carried a red poppy in each ear and a virgin on his back.

Behind Joan, in a single rank, was her mounted escort, the six good comrades who would accompany her to Chinon. There was a knight, Jean de Metz; a squire, Bertrand de Poulangy; Jean de Vienne, a herald of the king; Richard, the bowman; and finally Jean and Julien, the grooms of the knight and the squire.

Robert de Baudricourt was there: your typical man of judgment and common sense; the one who advised that Joan be sent back to her father "with a few good dish-cloths and some

kitchen-ware." A man of common sense makes an excellent counsellor, but the sublime is foreign to his nature; he will never save the world. Works of genius require a little maid, a shepherd, a God. . . .

However, Baudricourt had come to see them off. He even gave a sword to Joan, and patted her on the head. Sugar wouldn't melt in his mouth.

Already the sun was rising, the pale military sun of the eastern marches, walled in like a fortress. The clouds seemed like ramparts. Objects were firmly rooted; everything was solid and faithful to the soil. The whole population of Vaucouleurs was there—working men, serving women, round and ruddy youngsters—all of them thick peasants, beings of simple destiny, close to the soil. The horizon was closed and bolted. The trees returned to their roots, and the meadows were huddled in ranks about their hills. The wind was harsh; it smelt of tears. The pebbles in the road had the odour of home.

The little troop got under way.

Afterwards Joan will say, "Had I a hundred

fathers and a hundred mothers, still I would have gone."

She sat erect and pink on her fiery young horse, in the fresh charm of her masculine attire; or, as the chronicle says, "In kilts, her long hose tied with laces at the waist, booted and spurred, all sheathed in a coat of mail."

Toward midday they made a halt. They sat in a field of turnips and broke their fast. Poulangy had brought a few victuals; a cold chicken, eggs, half of a smoked ham. Joan, in the novelty of this journey through the open fields, in the informality of the picnic lunch, in her rôle as the young chieftain, was bursting with joy. She giggled and made puns.

"And where's the red ink?" she asked.

They ate with their fingers, gobbling their food hastily. Their knees were pointed, their mouths watering, their hearts easy. All the firmament above them was a white cloth. They ate under this cloth, with chuckles and great gulps of water. Divine missions are never spoiled by a little childishness.

Once more they mounted and rode off. Always, on the last stroke of twelve, the air and the heart become a little sad, because the day has already begun to decline. But the little troop rode on, at peace with their conscience and their stomach. A good digestion is enough to brighten the sky. They were choosing byways and roundabout paths, in order to avoid the towns and villages. They would skirt the edge of a wood, follow the bed of a brook, laughing and chatting; while their horses, crammed with grass and liberty, went prancing gaily under the wide vault of heaven.

Soon they reached the Ornain. It was a narrow stream, but fairly deep; full of sleeping backwaters and roots. The horses lacked space and were hardly able to swim; their riders had to ford the stream on foot. Jean and Julien, the two grooms, led all the mounts upstream, seeking a better place to cross. Joan removed her coat of mail, undid her laces, and rolled her long hose up from her ankles for fear of spoiling them. She waded into the stream, bare-legged, bare-foot, shivering and

laughing. "Ugh!" she cried, "the water is cold as an English miss!"

Jean de Metz on one side, and Poulangy on the other, were holding her by the arms. Tickled, the young woman changed quickly into a little girl. She uttered bleats like a dying lamb, and showed her teeth to the fishes. Little minnows as tender as young moons were nibbling her knees and heels, or rubbing their scales against her toes. The water was growing deeper, step by step. Joan raised her hose still higher. The deuce! she was showing her thighs. Now her modesty was becoming alarmed. She stopped in midstream, but Metz and Poulangy dragged her forward, cracking jokes. And Joan, like a nice girl:

"Now close your eyes. You mustn't look at me!"

My own opinion is that neither the knight nor the squire . . . But they had reached the middle of the bed. Hearing this dangerous word of bed, Joan grew still more troubled. Her great buxom body was red as a cherry. Now she was crying, "Go 'way, go away!" Her nerves began to tremble. She tried to

turn back, but was confused by fear. The water was tickling her thighs, chilling her heart, stealing her self-possession. She began to struggle wildly, while the two men pushed her forward. Then suddenly she lost her footing. She thought of angels. A blackbird sings in the alder trees. . . . The alders sing in the wind. . . . The wind sings in the sky. . . . The sky sings with the angels. . . . They hastened toward the shore. The water was growing shallow. Joan, letting her hose fall till they covered her knees, became calmer. Finally they reached the bank. She fled to the shelter of a bush and arranged her garments; then, to her two companions:

"You didn't see, did you?"

They were riding once more over ploughed ground and fields of alfalfa. The saddles were swaying gently and filling their hearts with shivers of joy. The horseshoes thumped on the ground, and the men found a strange security in this rhythm. Nothing calms the human heart like a sort of slow rocking, a

gently monotonous cadence. Calm is made of forgetfulness, and joy is kin to annihilation.

Evening came. The troop was tired. The sky shone for a moment; then its light was hidden in the breast of man. They marched in silence. They skirted a whitethorn copse, followed a wagon track. One after another, the horses whinnied, but the sound was lost in the chorus of crickets and screech-owls. Night was arriving by forced marches. Soon, the ground became dryer and more rocky, and the horses suddenly, with their great iron footsteps, cast out a whole sky of sparks.

It would shortly be time to rest and sleep. All their minds were disturbed by the thought. It was the first time these men would lie in the open, on the bare ground, and sleep in the arms of nature. After sundown, nature becomes a great hairy beast.

They chose a wood of beeches; halted; tied the horses to the trees. The wind ran from branch to branch, moaning with its huge vegetative voice. The grooms made a fire of twigs. The flame rose, making great patches of colour on the horses' hides.

Having cooked eggs in the ashes, they made a meal; but their appetites were scant. The darkness grew deeper and deeper. A little anxiety was stealing into the corners. Perhaps a little weariness. A vague regret also; regret for the warm cottage and the intimate horizon. Poulangy whistled from bravado. Richard threw branches into the fire. The shoulders of their horses were outlined against the shadows.

For the first time, Joan felt herself to be alone, alone with six men. She thought of sleeping beside six men, and became aware of shame and terror. Already Julien was gathering heaps of leaves, preparing dry couches. Jean de Vienne lay down in a heap of covers.

And Joan hesitated, full of embarrassment. She felt the need of silence, of delays. She said:

"Lie down and sleep, my friends. I am going to pray."

She left the circle of firelight and knelt at the foot of a beech tree, in the shadows. Joining her hands before the tree, her eyes before God, she prayed. She prayed, and suddenly

her prayer burst into tears; her heart burst into stars. Between the branches, in the cool moonlight, Domrémy appeared. The houses came floating toward her; the steeple was their guide. She saw her mother milking cows, and her dog Job, who barked with joy. Her brothers were seated at table. The cabbage soup was smoking like a good prayer. A pewter fork fell on the ground, and the yellow cat miaowed with all its heart. Her bedroom opened. The little bed appeared, empty. And suddenly Joan was overcome with a great lassitude. She felt the absolute need, the universal necessity, of lying in this bed and falling into a profound sleep. At this moment all the missions of the earth, and all the good works of all the world seemed vain, totally vain. Nothing mattered to Joan but a little sleep. O divine night in the Garden of Olives, how terribly human you appear! I imagine that in the hour of death, man feels himself moved by the same tremendous charm of sleep, of eternal sleep!

And now Joan was weeping before the lonely beech. Domrémy had disappeared, with its cattle and its Vosges. The cold wind was growling above her head, like a dog in a flock of stars. Joan wept; and in the end her tears softened her arid eyes and calmed her imagination. She prayed, and Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret descended from the skies, placed their four hands on her brow, and spoke with their golden voices in the lull of nature. "Hail, Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women. . . ."

In the calm of her soul, in the peace of the night, Joan rejoined the bivouac. She heard her comrades laughing in the shadows. And, in this solitude, human voices went straight to her heart.

She drew near. The six men were crouching in a circle, around a bird's nest. While she was praying, they had discovered the nest in a hazel bush. The souls of these cold Lorrainers are simple enough to enjoy the miniature grandeur of a nest. A spark of mischief

is not unbecoming to men of rude hearts. They stole the nest, chuckling, and were now preparing tranquilly to suck the eggs.

In their little horsehair vase, the four creamy shells were glittering in the moonlight.

With one tempestuous bound, Joan sprang to the midst of the group. Her anger blazed like a cock's comb. In the rich flesh of this peasant girl, the blood had magnificent revolts. All her veins swelled with purple. She roared:

"Damned rascals, is this the way you treat the birds of God! I'll cut off your ears. I'll hang you every one to the spruce trees of heaven. You are bad boys, and Joan doesn't love you!"

The six men hung their guilty ears under the moon. Their conscience was troubled. They stood there motionless, shrinking with fear.

Indeed, they looked so miserable that Joan immediately began to pity them. She burst into sudden laughter, flung her arms about their necks, and gave them great smacking kisses, one by one. . . .

Then she lay on the ground in all her ar-

mour. She refused to remove the smallest piece of her equipment. Metz and Poulangy stretched out, one at her left, the other at her right; both of them half-undressed and swathed in blankets. She was lying, this adolescent girl, between two men of arms. . . . (Ah! vile reader of 1926, not a smile; do you hear? . . . "*Sed ipsa puella jacebat juxta eum testem, suo gippono et caligis vaginatis induta.*") The night was cold; the sky clear and dripping with stars. Joan, resting on her back, her hands folded, waited for sleep. But a feeling of uneasy shame made her wakeful beyond measure. She was aware of the two chaste men at her sides, and her thoughts were surveying the regions of the flesh. She stared into the vault of heaven, where the commandments of God are written in starry words. She was waiting to hear the snores of her two companions before she fell asleep herself. And vaguely she thought of the gentle Dauphin who reigned in a fair city of the Loire. . . .

Suddenly, perched in a beech tree over her head, a nightingale began to sing. For God's commandments are also inscribed on the feath-

ers of nightingales. The song swelled little by little, becoming a tormented rapture in these shadows where six men were falling asleep. The modulation rose toward the planets, descended toward Joan, swelled and was everywhere propagated in this land of France, in this heart of France. So that little by little the physical reality of the bird was lost in the forest of dreams, and now it was France herself that was singing. . . .

Joan listened with all her blood and bone and marrow. The men at her sides were wrapped in slumber. Their snores echoed, full of shadow. And Joan listened to the snores of the men, the melody of the bird . . . ti, ti, ti . . . tirerirarirari. . . .

Guarded by six men of France, lulled by a nightingale of France, Joan slept. . . .

CHAPTER SIX

Touraine

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Touraine

ON March 5, the little troop arrived in Touraine.

Touraine! The hills became longer and softer; the air was lighter and at the same time more fresh; there was everywhere a feeling of tranquil strength and plenitude in flower; less wheat and more pears; gardens and pretty girls; fields of clover, vegetables or flax; osiers along the streams; parks, châteaux and, naturally, vineyards; a country that is plump and friendly, delicate and solid; most certainly intelligent, but with an intelligence built firmly on a base of nature; Touraine, the country of Rabelais, I believe (and of Descartes); of Mademoiselle de la Vallière (and of Balzac); and, cutting through all the landscape, a great brusque indolent stream, terrible and delicate, a river of sand and floods, yes, the Loire!

Here they were in friendly territory, the true heart of France. They began to travel openly, and during the night they lodged at inns.

On this particular evening they made their halt at Fierbois. Joan learned with great joy that the patron saint of the village was Catherine. She saw a favourable omen in the fact that her first steps in the real heart of France had led her to Saint Catherine. She was all sparkling with the news, and her appetite grew keener. During the meal she bubbled with laughter, rattled the plates, teased her comrades. A kind of rough joy filled all her body. Perhaps it was mingled with natural satisfaction at the end of a difficult journey. But above all it was the pleasure of seeing that the winds were favourable; the profound pleasure of feeling oneself in harmony with obscure forces, with the Divinity. All that night she slept as soldiers drink, by huge draughts, lying in the bed of happiness.

On the following morning she heard three masses at the altar of Saint Catherine and took communion there. May the dry agnostics

smile with all their teeth! For my part I believe that there is a far-reaching principle of life in communion. Man is not an independent entity, but a parcel of the Universe. To unite oneself with nature and the Divinity is to increase one's significance and broaden the scope of one's feelings till they reach the limit of the absolute. To melt and be incorporated into the Universe is to become oneself the Universe!

After hearing mass, Joan dictated a letter. It was addressed to the Dauphin, announced her arrival, and requested an audience. In the meantime she installed herself at Fierbois.

The little cavalcade from Lorraine was lodged in a vast hostelry on the outskirts of the village. They took their meals in the common room, which was broad and low, paved with stone slabs, roofed with wooden beams, and painted over with linseed oil. A yellowish light crept in through a row of fairly transparent windows. In the evening, the servant would light a dozen candles stuck into bottles. The walls were fragrant with the smell of burned mutton and the memories of rancid

bacon. One absorbed the thick atmosphere through the mouth, like something edible. Everything was solid, square, chunky and logical. In the middle stood the great table, cut from the heart of an oak, with its pewter dishes resting on the bare wood.

About twenty people were at dinner. There were drapers with their sly pinched faces, soldiers with red features, a few clerics and half a dozen farmers from the surrounding farms. Joan astounded the company by the bold speech of God's fresh peasant girl. She could talk only of cutting the English in four pieces, of holding processions in honour of St. Catherine, of delivering Orléans in twenty-four hours, of leading the Dauphin straightaway to Rheims. She spoke of these rather difficult matters with a tone of great ease, meanwhile taking great mouthfuls of food and drinking deep draughts of the native wine, which was uncommonly heady.

To eat well and drink well; to live well, think well and take communion:—is this way not the best to fulfil the destiny of man and perform the will of God?

In the afternoons Joan would explore the village, talking with the peasants and soldiers, entering the houses to rock the babies, drinking with the carters, comforting the people and glorifying God. She would pass long hours in the church, before the little blackened statue of Saint Catherine. She loved the romanesque windows with their scenes of animal life in yellow and red; the walls daubed in barbaric colours by some little fasting monk; the altars which blossomed with white linen. Behind the high altar she observed particularly the tomb of a knight, carved from a pink stone which resembled the sandstone of the Vosges.

At other times she would jump on her stallion and take long gallops through the fields. She abandoned herself to her steed and plunged forward, bareheaded, drinking the air and the sun as she went, singing and laughing in the madness of the gallop, all her senses offered to space and all her pores open to nature. She was dissolved in rich Matter and universal Movement, a cell of life in universal Life, a fertile molecule of the World!

However, two days passed without word from Chinon.

The Dauphin was hesitant by nature: a feeble and weakly prince, without faith or imagination, interested only in gambling and wenching, hypocritical and undignified, suspicious of everything—even his own mother; in the grasp of his counsellors, of his court!

The court was divided. Joan had the two queens on her side, along with the faction of Lorraine. But the Privy Counsellors, whose sympathies were Breton, foresaw an unhappy venture. Perhaps this girl was a sorceress, capable of involving the royal cause with the forces of Satan. Perhaps she was only a bold adventuress seeking her fortune. Already other self-styled maids had appeared, all of them cast in the same mould, all strong in constitution, all sent by God. The Counsellors could recall Marie of Avignon, who prophesied with great gestures before Charles VI; Pierronne of Brittany, her great eyes burning like tapers; and Catherine of Rochelle with her squad of Gascon women.

However, there was a sure method of verifying Joan's satanism. In the Middle Ages it was admitted that virginity formed a talisman against the Evil One; that the Devil had no hold, no power over a virgin.

If Joan was a maid, the hypothesis of sorcery must be abandoned.

For this reason, and also to gain time, it was decided to send a Commission to examine the girl. On March 8, three great ladies of the Court, by name Yolande of Anjou, Queen of Sicily and mother of the young queen; Jeanne de Preuilly, the Lady of Gaucourt; and Jeanne de Mortemer, the Lady of Trèves, betook themselves to Fierbois. The sanitary inspection was held in Joan's room, on the upper story of the inn. The good ladies took all possible precaution; and Jeanne de Preuilly, who was short-sighted, provided herself with horn-rimmed spectacles. It was necessary to certify *de visu* not only the respectability, but even the sex of Joan of Arc, for some had feared that they were dealing with a man. The results were conclusive, and it was necessary to acknowledge the truth. "*Joanna fuit*

visitata, bina vice, si esset vir vel mulier, corrupta vel virgo." "*On trouva que c'estait une vraye et entière pucelle, sans corrupcion ni violence*—They found that she was a true and intact virgin, without violence or corruption." All this was attested by affidavits in regular form.

From this time forth, Joan could hardly be dismissed. And curiosity, a glowing curiosity, was now playing its part. The feminine element was bursting with gossip and mysteries. Moreover, the common people began to be moved. Great lords declared themselves for Joan, and the adroit Queen Yolande, scenting the possibility of a brilliant intrigue, was manœuvring in favour of the Maid.

The Duke of Alençon hastened in from Saint-Florent, where he had been shooting quail, and declared flatly that Joan's influence was responsible for a marvellous bag of game. He had killed forty-eight quail in an hour.

Having received rumours of this favourable intervention, the Bastard of Orléans sent messengers to seek Joan of Arc.

Finally the Dauphin decided to see her. The interview was set for March 10.

It was evening at Chinon, in the palace of the Grand-Gandin. A vast rectangular hall with pillars of bare stone; half barracks and half a cloister. Architecture of an elementary style based on use and solidity. Looming from the high, bare whitewashed walls, antlers or boars-heads, the spoils of the chase; and beside them hand-woven tapestries or paintings by Fouquet le jeune. Illumination by candles and torches. The candles, either rudely painted in blue and red or else hand-modelled by the pages, were burning in chandeliers which hung from the beams of the ceiling. Fifty torches, in sconces of green bronze, were scattered about the room; sparkling, smoking, giving forth incessantly the odour of incense and the crackling of rubber.

The hall was crowded. All the court was there, down to the smallest page. The men, standing, with their velvet hoods draped over one ear and with short, stuffed pourpoints

swelling about their waists; their legs distinctly outlined and their long shoes curling up from the end of their toes, were passing up and down, back and forth, two by two, four by four; gossiping in low voices or perhaps ogling a chosen lady. The women were seated in extraordinarily low armchairs of tawny leather. Their bosoms were moulded in tight bodices with shoulder straps; their arms bare to the armpits; their chins rounded, their breasts ample, and their heads covered with long *hennins*, either square or rising to a point. Round the ladies pressed a troop of charming boys—pages or pagelings. They crouched on the floor, in circles about their mistresses; handsome and melancholy, bare-headed and bare-armed; dressed in pink doublets and long green hose. They were busy with games—drop-the-handkerchief, *la Maguelette*—or perhaps they were singing little graceful tunes with their fresh angel-mouths. Some would fan their lady; others would braid her hair; still others, who bore handkerchiefs, would wipe her nose, pare her fingernails with a golden knife, or smear her cheeks with pomade.

And all this little world was chattering—joyful, barbarous and picturesque—while torches like comets cast their great resinous shadows over the crowd.

Often they pointed to a group of courtiers in the corner. The Dauphin himself was standing in the midst of these. He was disguised as a simple knight, in order to mislead the Maid.

Joan entered, her step assured, her eyes keen, her carriage easy. Immediately she made an abundant impression on the crowd. From all her person there emanated a sort of earthy magnetism. She was eighteen at the time, and her splendid youth was in all its flower. Tall and robust, noble in bearing, with the features of a drunken angel, a wide sensual mouth across her sanguine cheeks, the thick nose of Old-Testament mothers, a great mass of red hair on her head, her neck like a tower and her chin like a little child's:—she was indeed a lovely girl, and greatly to be desired. There was a hint of malice at the corner of her lips, and a few tiny pimples on her

country skin. Two monumental thighs supported the rich harmony of her body. Her ample shoulders seemed destined to support the realm of France in its entirety.

Ah! Joan, an author of vile mind* described you as a victim of hysteria; and now I learn that you were a woman with great breasts. "*Et aliquando vidit eius mammas quae pulchrae erant.*" (Duke of Alençon.) "She was strong and well compassed of members." (*Chronicle of the Maid.*) "Which Maid was tall and passing fair." (*Mirror of Virtuous Women.*) D'Aulon says, in his deposition, "*elle estait jeune fille, belle et bien formée. De plus, il a oy dire à plusieurs femmes, qui ladicte pucelle ont veue par plusieurs fois nue, et sceu ses secretz, que oncques n'avait eu la secrecte maladie des femmes.*" Boulainvilliers becomes a trifle rhetorical: "*Haec puella competentis est elegantiae; paucum loquitur; vocem mulieris ad instar habet gracilem; hilarem gerit vultum; inaudibilis laboris.*" In general all the chroniclers, all the historians

* Anatole France. The whole paragraph burlesques the method of his famous and sceptical *Jeanne d'Arc.*

JOAN IS LED TO THE DAUPHIN

She is followed by two men-at-arms. A group of peasants, by the roadside, are saluting the "Saint of France."

(From a miniature in the Bibliothèque Nationale)

(save only the English Grafton, who says with biting ill-humour, "Being so ugly, she had no great difficulty in remaining a virgin"), all, from M. Lebrun de Charmettes down to M. Guido Goerres and Philippus Bergam (*De Claris Mulieribus*) agree in describing her as an accomplished beauty.

She advanced toward the King without hesitation, like a force of nature. She gazed at the face of this prince for whom her heart had beaten so many beats. All smiles, she knelt before him:

"Gentle Dauphin!" she began.

But the King, making great eyes, tried to mock her:

"You are mistaken, my lovely child. I am not the King. There he stands, in the other corner."

Then Joan, with gentle malice:

"All joking aside. I can't tell A from B. But God is not to be fooled!"

And with greater emphasis she continued:

"Gentle Dauphin, my name is Joan the Maid, and I am sent by God to bid that you

be anointed and receive your crown in the city of Rheims!"

Then she took off her iron ring, the gift of Saint Catherine, and slipped it quickly on the finger of the Dauphin.

Charles grew pale as a yellow violin. He recognized the ring; it had been lost at Bourges, in the bed of Agnes Sorel. He stared at the maid with the long hollow eyes of a do-nothing prince. Then, brusquely, he took her hands and drew her aside, into a corner of the hall.

And Joan murmured in his ear:

"No, in God's name, you are not a bastard!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

A Stout Cudgel

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A Stout Cudgel

CHARLES VII was weak, but credulous. Under certain conditions, every defect may become a pure quality. It was the credulity of Charles VII which permitted Joan of Arc's career. With a Louis XI, the face of the world would have been changed.

Charles VII believed in Joan of Arc. His manner of belief was a little superstitious, I admit; still, it is only the fact which is essential.

In the first week of April, the King gave orders to prepare a military expedition of great force. His best commanders, including the Duke of Alençon himself, were charged to assemble the soldiers and provisions at Blois. This army would be placed under the command of the Maid.

Joan herself was preparing for war. And first she required a martial equipment, a suit

of armour. "For the surety of her body, our lord the King had wrought for the said Maid a harness befitting her said body." (D'Aulon.)

It was the Duke of Alençon who gave her a horse: a great black charger of Norman blood, fully caparisoned with white steel. Joan's armour was also pure white, with silver ornaments. This little peasant from Lorraine had been accustomed to riding cows, donkeys or broken-down nags in her petticoats. Now, the first time she saw herself armed from head to foot in these metal garments, astride a fiery charger that pranced and pawed the earth, she was unable to repress four tears of joy.

She felt herself all strength, all jubilation. The health of her body overflowed through every joint of her armour. A great physical exaltation had broadened the scope and the sense of her being. Joy, a vast elementary joy, was gushing from her soul through all the pores of her body. . . . She fingered every seam with the naïve pride of a little girl in her Sunday best. Her gauntlets and her cuisses, her brassarts and her skirt of taces, thrilled her

flesh and her heart with all the splendour of glory and all the enchantments of power.

She had a standard made by Heuves Polnoir, painter (and today, why aren't French painters charged with the execution of military emblems?) Her sword? Joan wished for a legendary sword; in brief, for a sword which was a sword. By the advice of Saint Catherine, she ordered a search to be made for the blade of the knight whose tomb she had seen in the church at Fierbois. It was brought to her, covered with rust.

"I'll clean it in the bellies of the English!" she exclaimed.

Finally she had to choose her military household. One day, while strolling through the country, she met an extraordinary predicant friar. Two sharp eyes glittered in his emaciated face, that of a burning mystic. His long black beard smelt of powder. His slender hands were like nerves, and all his body expressed a divine madness.

Joan cried to him boldly:

"See here, you handsome friar, I like you. Do you want to be my chaplain?"

He gave his name, which was Jean Pasquerel. And he followed the Maid contentedly, stroking his long beard, which was covered with lice.

This, briefly, was the exact composition of Joan's military household:

Men-at-arms: JEAN DE METZ and POULANGY.

Squire: JEAN D'AULON.

Pages: LOUIS and RAYMOND DE CONTES.

Chaplain: JEAN PASQUEREL.

Joan was now ready, and made her way to Blois. A vast disorder reigned there. The whole city was tumult and confusion; a hurly-burly of arms and provisions, a hive of soldiers and grain. All the famous captains were in Blois:—the maréchal de Retz and the maréchal de Saint-Sévère; Louis de Culant, the Admiral; Ambroise de Loré and La Hire. Regnault de Chartres, Archbishop of Rheims and Chancellor of France, was charged with organizing the expedition.

It was a curious army, this army of Charles VII. A bizarre conglomeration of strumpets

and desperados. These professional soldiers, recruited by hazard, serving first England, then Burgundy, then France, and living chiefly by pillage wherever they served, were strangers both to discipline and religion. In general the whole epoch was fundamentally depraved, although with a certain strength in its depravity. It was not so much a question of vice (using the word in its most general sense) as a sort of universal license. All the doors of pleasure were opened wide. There was a general dispersion of forces, and a disintegration of moral principles.

This period might easily be called the Age of the Bastards. In the first rank, Dunois, the Bastard of Orléans, a title of glory. The bastard John I founded a new dynasty in Portugal. The bastard Transtamare conquered Castille. The comte de Clèves, who was no relation to the duchess of the same name, had sixty-three bastards, no more, no less. Philip the Good founded the order of the Golden Fleece; he had twenty-seven wives and sixteen bastards. John of Burgundy, Bishop of Cambrai, was served during Sun-

day masses, at the high altar, by his thirty-six young bastards dressed as choir-boys.

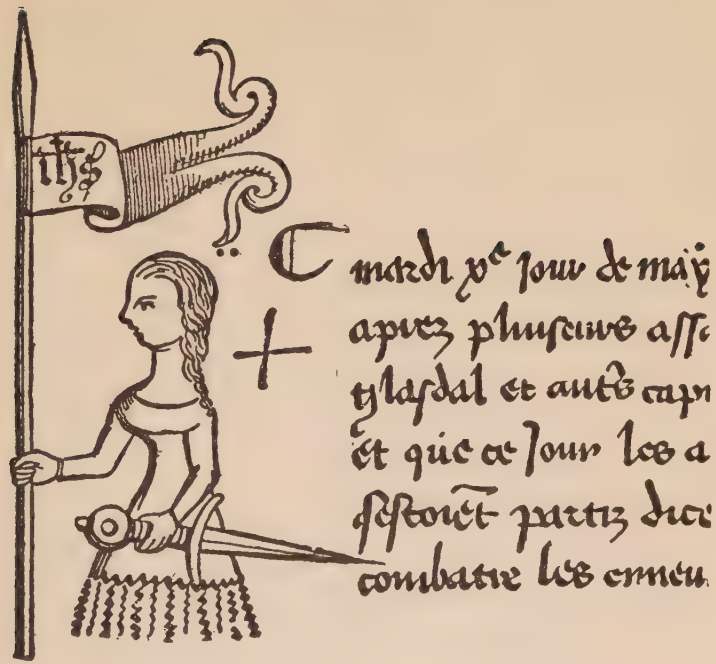
Joan's first task was to purify the French army. A divine mission necessarily required pure means, a pure army.

Arriving in the camp at Blois, she met La Hire.

La Hire! What a curious type, this La Hire! A subtle Gascon and a coarse brigand; a Ulysses in bulk. And at the same time, the naïvety of soul which is the poetry of the Middle Ages. It was his custom to say, "If God were a soldier, he'd plunder like the rest of us!" Always he addressed God as equal to equal. The chronicle relates: "La Hire prayed to God, saying in his Gascon, 'Lord God, I pray Thee to do for La Hire what La Hire would do for Thee, if Thou wert La Hire and La Hire were God.' "

The old ruffian, with a pint of cupidity staining his hard face, looked at Joan keenly; his eyes were those of a bird of prey.

"By the wounds of God! The pretty chick!" he roared.



JOAN, HER SWORD AND HER STANDARD

This "portrait" was drawn by the clerk of the Rouen court, during her trial, on the margin of his register.

(*From the French National Archives*)

Joan came forward and looked into the whites of his eyes:

"La Hire, La Hire, the Maid forbids you to swear—under pain of Hell."

At the name of the Maid, he was seized with a sudden paralysis, and hung his fierce head. A magical fear stole over his barbarous soul.

But Joan smiled at his air of guilt, and ran her hands through his hair:

"Don't cry, La Hire, don't cry! I'll be glad to allow you one little oath. From now on, you shall swear *By my staff!*"*

She continued on her way. Horrors! The entire camp was only a scene of debauchery, a vast bordello. Here and there were groups of dishevelled soldiers, with cassocks open to reveal their hairy breasts, swallowing huge goblets of red wine. Others, having drawn to the side, were shamelessly caressing their half-naked wenches. Still others, on boards or the ground itself, were playing at dice with awful

* La Hire, for his bravery, rapacity, friendship with Xaintrailles and loyalty to Joan of Arc, became a figure of popular legend. In French playing cards, the jack of hearts is called La Hire.

eyes. Scores of drunkards were wallowing in grass and spittle, while they howled abominable refrains from their false throats. In the tents, in pools of sunlight, one caught a glimpse of swinish hands that were playing over flesh. Old toothless strumpets plied their trade in the open air, and were fouling the atmosphere of Touraine with their parchment laughter. Little bare-headed girls in shawls, with one hand on their hips and a mortal smile, went wandering through the camp, offering their throats at auction. And too-lovely boys, boys fashioned on the model of the angels, were publicly vowing the organs of error to the furies. Everywhere Greek gestures, Gallic songs, Sodom and Gomorrha. Licentious apostrophes and stinking jeers crossed and clashed in the air with a noise like flesh. . . . Bursts of laughter came piercing the sky like swords. Cries of the skin, organic grumblings, bodily relief; and now all nature was stinking and discoloured. The disorder of the soul had opened all the ports of the body. A horrible odour of gorged food, bile and latrines streaked and swelled the firmament from high

to low. On that day a general filthiness composed of thighs, vomits, wine and excrement had taken possession of the French army.

Joan sped with great steps through all this rottenness. She found a stout cudgel, and struck great blows on every side. She marched, terrible and pure, in an imposing rage, brandishing her club, howling with all her strength, here and there, forward and backward, upsetting the gaming tables and pots of wine, boxing the ears of the blasphemers, lifting the tent flaps, smacking the little boys. She ran in every direction, from north to south, from east to west, striking without respite or reply. A holy ardour was flaming in her biceps. All the fire of the prophets, all the whiteness of virgins, lashed the blood in her veins. Around her, terror and emptiness were spread. The hussies and bravoes were fleeing in blank terror. Orgy like a dragon crawled back, into its hole; the dice vanished; the alcohol was magically transformed to water. The men replaced their oaths in their scabbards. They smoothed and adjusted their clothing and their souls. Everyone brought order into his actions, re-

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRA

gained his place, resumed his discipline. The sky washed the camp with waves of azure. The last red wenches were fleeing, with naked shoulders and hair that tumbled down their backs; while Joan, her cudgel in her fist, pursued them farther . . . farther . . . to the depths of the horizon. . . .

CHAPTER EIGHT

Orléans

CHAPTER EIGHT

Orléans

OUT of this dense mob of rutting bandits, Joan made an army of saints. Into this mountain of flesh she introduced morality and God.

She bade them install a portable chapel, made of wood and wire, in the centre of the camp. In front of the chapel Joan planted a great banner depicting Jesus Christ on the cross. The banner was of white silk and the crucifix was red. Twice daily, at the noontide and the evening Angelus, a bell summoned the soldiery to prayer. Bishops, priests and monks would gather round the banner, chanting hymns in honour of the Virgin. Then Joan would mount on a platform of drums and make an address. This audience of barbarous soldiers, full of naïvety and crimes, was eminently susceptible to passionate arguments. They were converted in throngs.

In the evening, the pale starlight and the trouble of nocturnal spaces would add the note of something fresh, and virgin, and far-off. All Touraine, traversed by gentle winds and flowers, by the tender charm of rivers and growing things, was helping to soften the hearts of these magnificent animals. They would listen to the sermon, impressed by their own number, amazed by their gravity; standing motionless under the breath of eloquence and the wind. Then they would confess by thousands, round the silken banner, in great monastic shadows. Ah! the brave confessions of these old drunken soldiers! How many fearful revelations, how many crimes which dotted the shadow of their robust bodies! And how their brawny chests would drip with pillage, rapine, unholy vices, murder!

On April 27, just as the sun was rising, and to cries of Orléans! Orléans! the whole army got under way. Shining with armour and clean flesh, this mass of soldiers went marching along the Loire, on the left bank, the side of the heart.

The sky was wearing its holiday best of sun

and coloured clouds. The air was rich with a tenderness beyond all measure. The mildness of earth and sky invaded the horses, the features of the men, their steel bucklers, the planes of space, the great crossbows, the dome of heaven. Here, beside the river of France, godliness and savagery were united with a joyous abundance of nuptials.

The advance guard was a squad of black-cowled monks, their bare feet treading the sand, their frocks tucked round their waists, and their pates bare to the sky. They carried Joan's great banner by armfuls. Next came the troop of iron knights, with Joan riding in the front rank. The mass of them was spangled with oriflammes, plumed helmets and long spurs. Next the men-at-arms came marching, buttressed with bucklers and sheathed in mail. Finally the archers, the provision train, the rolling kitchens; a huge, magnificent and twisted array, a chaos of metal and leather. The monks were lustily chanting the *Veni Creator*, while all the army in chorus repeated the refrain. Enormous chaplets were hanging on the breasts of the horses. Crosses

mingled with swords, and the croziers of the bishops were lost among the trees. Here and there a bowman adjusting his bow, the horses breaking wind or a captain making water in the Loire added the little incongruous detail so highly prized by those who collect engravings. And truly the spectacle of this army of God, sheathed in iron, marching through the lovely April morning; these thick-set lusty ruffians as hairy as so many devils, these enormous urchins, or saints turned inside-out; these muscles dripping with blood and trapped by eternal woman; the spectacle of these Great Companies advancing with cantatory and digestive noises along the world's most charming river, rank by rank, in a splendid array diversified with little realistic details; a procession of fresh souls through the dust of men and the rich odour of sweating feet; the spectacle of these soldiers crammed with childishness and grandeur proceeding through the leafless vineyards, the fields of wheat or alfalfa, the plots of cabbage or salad-greens, as they howled their canticles in Latin under the fair Gallic sky of Touraine:—this spectacle was calcu-

lated to give a magnificent picture of the marriage of Force and Faith!

On April 29, about ten in the morning, they came in sight of Orléans.

Orléans, Orléans, you are the centre of my book, Orléans, the objective of God, a name, a title! Here you stand, O citadel of iron and grass, heaped with all the riches of History and Nature. Your wealthy drapers, your fragrant vinegars, your cooperies rich with the smell of wood and wine, your fat goldsmiths:—all these assure your place in the first rank of illustrious cities. In your very syllables, full of energy and oxygen, I recognize your physical strength and the richness of your pride that is nourished with fruits and meats. There is something proud and fresh, like a mixture of hearts and cannons and water from the Loire, which rises in my throat contentedly at the sole mention of your name, Orléans, green Orléans, throned in your plain of wheat and peach-trees, Orléans of the sieges blocking the path to the sea, Orléans of the Loire, of the Ballads, of Joan of Arc!

Dunois, the governor of Orléans, marched forth to meet the Maid. Their encounter took place near the stronghold of Les Augustins, which was held by the English.

"Are you the Bastard of Orléans?" Joan said.

And after the customary introductions and forms of courtesy:

"In God's name I bring you the best aid that was ever given to any captain or any city!"

"Yes, there are ten thousand men, I believe. . . ."

"There is myself!" Joan said.

They manœuvred till nightfall, trying to evade the English blockade. At dusk they crossed the Loire on boats. And soon the army was within the walls of Orléans.

An indescribable emotion reigned in the city. People and things were submerged in a wave of hope and madness. Ten thousand torches were flaming under the moon. The pick of the citizens, in their long burghers' hoods, were lining the streets to guard Joan's passage. Gentles and simples, clerks and cap-

tains, elbowed and jostled in the public squares. An enormous hubbub, formed of howls and bravos, of hiccuping horses and giggling wenches rose from the seething crowd. Dogs mad with joy were barking behind the scenes. Housewives in wooden shoes blossomed like flowers on the doorsteps. Perching on pointed roofs, on gable-ends and towers, were clusters of adolescent boys and girls, scattering their applause over the city with open hands. And the burghers' daughters, in linen coifs, their cheeks scarlet with pleasure, were standing at the windows and smiling with all their teeth as they showered rose-petals, carnations and sweet peas over the long procession.

And now monks issued from their monasteries in great flocks, crossing the ends of their beards with sweeping gestures. Thread-legged urchins, their breeches torn and a stick of barley-sugar behind their ears, went galloping down the street, shouting with joy and swinging tallow lanterns. The more drunken soldiers broke their swords and threw the slivers to the winds. Delirium seemed to be falling from the moon in large yellow puddles. The

frenzy seized even the public monuments and the trees in the municipal gardens. All the throng wept in gusts, and during the moments of silence one could hear the rustling of tears in the gutters, the rustling of stars in the sky.

Joan advanced slowly. She was completely armed; her head was bare; her great black charger was chiselled from stone with sweeping blows *à la Michel-Ange;* her hair cut short *à la Jeanne d'Arc.* She was smiling to the mob. At her left rode Dunois, "mounted and armed with passing richness." The populace watched her with open eyes, "as if they were regarding God himself." Women who carried babies in their arms came to present their progeny. Others knelt at her horse's feet, kissing her ankles and her spurs. The throng to see her "could not look its fill." The sick came to touch her armour, and were drunk with health. Young people kissed her iron thighs with smacking lips. Old men with a passion for souvenirs slunk forward to pluck a hair from her horse's tail. The children threw her cherries and confetti. Flocks of pigeons and little girls fluttered about her. Little urchins

would boldly clamber up, and kneeling behind the saddle would embrace her breast and arms. Men of dignity were seen to perch on the bridle-posts only to touch her limbs. Brats and flowers in bunches were clinging to the flanks of her horse. The soul of the crowd was rising to the assault of this maid. The bells rang in all their bronze. The trumpets sounded in all their brass.

All Orléans was a woman mad with passion, clinging round the neck of Joan of Arc. . . .

CHAPTER NINE

Depart!

CHAPTER NINE

Depart!

JOAN was now a general. But she was also a woman, a true woman. And she was a daughter of God. In the name of God and Woman she detested war, in principle.

Before shedding blood, she made every effort to gain peace.

On arriving at Orléans, she wrote her famous letter to the English: DEPART:

Jesus, Mary,

King of England and you, Duke of Bethfort, who call yourself Regent of the realm of France,—you, Guillaume de la Poule, Earl of Suffort; William Glacidas, Sir John Talbot, and you, Thomas Sire d'Escalles, archers, companions of war, gentle and simple:—Depart, go ye forth, in God's name, into your own land. *Render to the Maid the good French towns which you have taken and ravished, or you will*

smart for it some day! I am chief of war, and wherever in France I encounter your people, combat to the death! I came here by God's grace to smite you, body to body, out of the realm of France.

Written this Tuesday of Holy Week.

THE MAID.

Ah! the grand manner! And how it thrills the mind, the bowels, the breast! What a proud joy is hers in making threats, what health in this brave fury! A mixture of prods and slaps with bloody summonses; but how it reeks of strength! It is here that Joan of Arc delights me to the point of apostrophe. Ah! Joan, Joan, you are mine and only mine! You are indeed the incarnation of my dream, and had you never existed, surely I should have been proud to fashion you out of air.

It ought to be mentioned that Joan was an excellent correspondent. Of her own accord she wrote to the King of England, the Duke of Burgundy, the English leaders, the gov-

ernors of the cities. She was full of cunning and knew the value of intimidation.

The English greeted her message with a mixture of ridicule and spite. They found it bizarre and abnormal, but they also discerned that air of assurance which is always troubling. The letter, with its tone of simple mastery, irritated these eternal conquerors. They burst into roars of derisive laughter.

Before attacking, Joan wished to unite all her resources, all her troops. She was expecting reinforcements from Blois. She counted a great deal on enthusiasm, but did not disdain practical means and material forces. Always the formula of Michelet, which explains Joan best from the practical, or positivist, standpoint: "Good sense in the midst of exaltation." (There is lacking from this excellent formula the obscure part of God.)

While waiting, Joan inspected the enemy positions. She wandered on horseback, alone, around the English bastions. It was only for exercise, but she kept her good eye open. In other words, this dissembler was studying the best method of making an assault. Joan's

talent for quick decisions was based on a solid foundation of knowledge.

One day, as she was examining Les Tournelles, she apostrophized William Glacidas, or Glasdale, who commanded the fort:

"Good day, Milord Glacidas. A word to the wise; don't force the Maid to destroy you. In the name of God, depart!"

The commander, smarting, replied with his English sneer:

"Go tend your cows, you damned strumpet!"

Joan was sensitive to these barrack-room insults. The maid of war nearly swooned. She saw herself as a young girl in the meadows of the Vosges. The woman in Joan was always present. She blushed, hid her head, and rode back to Orléans, weeping hot tears.

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Joan was also concerned with questions of morale. She liked to wander through the city, talking to people in her keen and lively idiom, which was full of sallies and rough words. She would stop the housewives in the

street for a bit of gossip. The children followed her in swarms, and she threw them bits of chocolate or English bonbons.

She went to the market and bargained for vegetables and fruits. She was disturbed by the high cost of living, a source of grumbling and pessimism. One day, seeing that prices were rising feverishly, she requisitioned all the supplies and had them distributed immediately to the crowd, free; in this way she secured her place in the hearts of the housewives.

On May 2 she had the following proclamation posted on the walls of the city:

Brave citizens of Orléans:

I have received a summons from God to deliver Orléans. This summons I will fulfil to the very end.

THE MAID.

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However, the reinforcements arrived. The period of preparations was now at an end. It was the time when talking ceases and action begins.

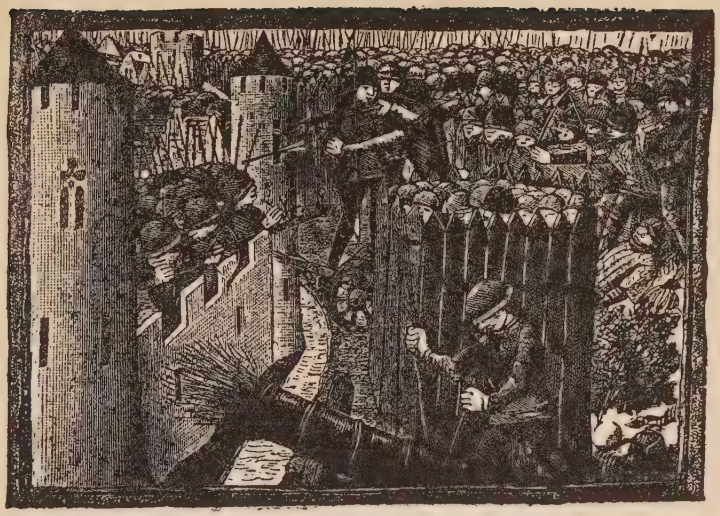
On May 4, Joan attacked the bastion of Saint-Loup. It was her first battle. At the very beginning she saw one of her comrades fall by her side, his breast shattered by a cannon-ball. She was maddened by the sight of blood. This clear red fluid stirred all the pity of women in her breast, and all the perturbations of the flesh. She descended from her horse, bent over the soldier. "Ah!" she cried, "never did I see French blood that my hair did not rise with horror!"

Before night the bastion of Saint-Loup was taken, its defenders massacred, its ruins in flames.

On May 6, they carried Les Augustins by assault. That evening, standing on the walls of the fort, Joan let her eyes rest longingly on Les Tournelles, the only English stronghold remaining on the south bank of the Loire. She was dreaming, motionless. But suddenly bursting into animation, she cried:

"By my staff, tomorrow, tomorrow I will have this fort!"

On the following morning she took communion. Then she breakfasted royally. The



AN EPISODE OF THE SIEGE

An English attack on Orléans during April, 1429. There is a *bombarde*, or mortar, in the foreground.

(From a miniature in the Bibliothèque Nationale)

menu included a pigeon's wing, fresh green peas with sugar, Brie cheese, white Anjou wine. With a full stomach and a full soul, she mounted her horse.

At the last moment they brought her a shad, fresh from the river. Joan weighed it in her hand, examined the gills. And then:

"Keep it for this evening," she said laughing. "I'll bring you a little *goddam* who'll be glad to eat a bite."

She set out, crossing the Loire in the company of La Hire. The troops had been defiling all the night. They were already assembled before Les Tournelles.

Joan broke out in interjections to her page:

"Lump of evil, you're going to make me late!"

The assault began. The sky over Orléans was soft as a woman's breast. A green breeze, laden with cherries, steeples and water, went rambling through the sky with short steps, like a little girl. The air smelt of roses, the Loire and Ronsard.

Joan, with her sword in her fist, was shouting commands. "In God's name, my

youngsters, be bold!" She exhorted the soldiers with blows from her tongue, with blows from her staff. "When any of her people went astray, she struck them with her cudgel passing sore." (*Journal of a Citizen of Paris.*) Her hair was waving in the wind among the brandished ladders. Her wide-lipped mouth burst into cries of blood in the hurly-burly of the iron assault. The buxom French peasant girl was flowering in red during the heat of battle.

Meanwhile the Gascons of La Hire made a breach in the outer ramparts. The English were withdrawing gradually toward the central fort. The hand-to-hand fighting began. Joan, in the front rank, was raining blows on the enemy with all her might. "Every stroke of her sword was a death-blow; when she struck the helm of a man-at-arms the steel sank therein a palm's breadth." (*Chronicle of Lorraine.*) Her great black eyes, drunk with powder and joy, were spurting flames on her adversaries. Her body emitted a magnetic power. Through a gash in her cuirass one of her breasts appeared, as

tender as Touraine, bewitching as a cannon. Her breast, like a serpent, hypnotized the English army. At this moment, superb with energy and life and death, Joan was a great block of radium consuming men and cities.

The English garrison took refuge in the fort. There, it became necessary to scale the walls. Without waiting for planks or faggots, Joan jumped into the fosse, a ladder in her hand. Her companions were thunderstruck by this example; and in emulation they leaped to her side. Here, in this atmosphere of conquest and sensuality, there were no limits to their audacity. These men, led by this woman, would have laid siege to the clouds.

Joan raised the first ladder against the ramparts with her own hands. . . . Suddenly a cry of blood and weakness . . . she fell . . . an arrow was quivering in her naked breast, her breast which had terrified England. She was carried from the scene of battle. Blood was streaming down her cuirass, down her bosom. She felt its hot, insipid, powerful

touch on her skin . . . like a warm red flower. She was weeping.

They laid her on the grass. The surgeons were busy bandaging the wound. They applied a poultice of olive oil and lard: "*oleum olivarum cum lardo.*" However, the Maid kept her eyes on Les Tournelles. She saw the French, worn out by ten hours of struggle, thrown into consternation by her wound, hesitate, turn face, retreat. . . . Joan sprang to her feet. She pushed Surgery aside and flew to her soldiers:

"In God's name," she cried to them, "you shall soon be inside. Rest for a moment; eat and drink!"

Knights, archers, men-at-arms, all took their seats at random. It was a truce of the stomach. They removed their helmets and opened their boxes of provisions. The pages brought great loaves of bread and bottles of wine. Everyone ate with great appetite. The air smelt of saliva and sausages. And little birds came to perch on their armour, hunting for crumbs, pecking and singing. . . .

For their part, the English sat on the tur-

rets and broke their fast. They joked and threw great slices of beefsteak to the French.

A last swig of wine, and the assault continued.

Joan sprang forward, grasping her banner. The attackers swarmed about her, bounding like rubber balls. At this moment a pigeon came flying over her head. She saw the bird, and showing her troops this favourable omen, she cried:

"Into the fort, children; everything is ours!"

In less than a moment a thousand ladders were raised against the walls. Men were swarming up the ramparts on every side. As if by magic the walls had blossomed with climbing soldiers. It was a combination of sorcery, gymnastics and prestidigitation. The army was flying from the ground on the wings of a lyric ardour. Crawling on one another's backs, clinging to the stones with nails and teeth and toes, all climbed, all rose. "And gathering of birds was never seen that flocked so thick and fast upon a twig as all these warriors together mounted upon the ramparts."

At this spectacle, the people of Orléans, who had been watching the struggle from the other bank of the river, could no longer hold back. The crowd in a terrible enthusiasm rushed across the bridge. Men, women and children, sobbing with joy, leaping with ecstasy, broke in waves against the walls of Les Tournelles. A sea of people was sweeping into battle. All Orléans, as one man, had come to drive out the English.

Already the fort was taken. Flames of pleasure were spawned among the walls. A horrible smell of powder rose to nauseate man and sky. Here and there were creatures of hair and iron, standing with their feet in pools of blood, and slaughtering the last of the English with furious blows.

Glacidas, seeking to flee, was drowned under Joan's eyes. The Maid, watching him drink, cried to him merrily: "Aha, Glacidas, call me a strumpet, will you! (*Tu me vocasti putain.*) Here's to your good health, Glacidas!"

In three shakes of a lamb's tail—or in four days, if you insist—Orléans had been delivered.

CHAPTER TEN

Portrait in Crayon and Charcoal

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Portrait in Crayon and Charcoal

THE unknown, the divine, is an element of importance in every truly great action. The phenomenon permits of no human explanation. Reason bows before miracle.

The rationalistic attitude seems infinitely petty and mean before a Joan of Arc. Genius, happiness, art, the forces of nature, all escape the grasp of our syllogisms.

The plane of effects is perpendicular to the plane of causes.

Joan of Arc cannot possibly be likened to Napoleon. One belongs to the realm of God; the other to the realm of Genius. (And when I speak of God, I beg that unbelievers will replace this word by another more to their fancy: thus, Pan, the Supreme Being, the Great Whole, etc., etc. . . .)

However, Joan of Arc was not purely mi-

raculous. This flower had roots. Reasonable and rational appearances (observe that I say *appearances*) were safeguarded up to a certain point. In Joan, the divine and human planes intersected.

She possessed all the human qualities which go to make a Joan of Arc. She had the proper mind, physique and temperament for her profession.

To begin with, a great healthy body. Joan was all health. What a shame to mention hysteria! She was a buxom French country girl, nourished with simple elements, fresh vegetables and native meats; solidly planted on her strong thighs; her feet rooted in the soil. Her respiratory and circulatory systems were intact. A little sanguine, perhaps; with thick blood in her great veins, the tranquil flesh of a frank animal, a thick and elastic skin. Her body was a Greek temple, without embellishments, but firmly based on eternal foundations. She was all synthesis, density and proportion.

At the service of her great body, a temperament all fire. Physical health is a static

element, while temperament is the dynamic principle. Health implies calm and moderation; temperament is revolutionary. In Joan, the two principles were allied and mingled. If her flesh was all health, her spirit was all passion. She breathed, ate, desired, loved, hated with passion. This is not to be confounded with neuroticism, which is an unhealthy stimulation, both intermittent and accidental. Neuroticism is the mind overstepping the limits of the body. With Joan, her physical ferment might rather be compared to the ebullition of new wine. Her temperament was the alcohol.

Here Joan's instinct coincided with modern doctrines of the military art. She herself was the living theory of the Offensive.

De l'audace, encore de l'audace, et toujours de l'audace. Audacity, still more audacity, and always audacity.

She said, "Enter boldly among the English," and there she entered herself.

The basis of audacity is youth. It is curious how young they were, these kings and generals, when Orléans was captured. The Maid

was eighteen; Charles VII was twenty-seven; Alençon was twenty-two. The maréchal de Rais was twenty-three years old. Only youth can save the world; age and experience are the most redoubtable microbes from which man suffers.

A germ of violence in her ardour; and why not? Sometimes Joan's actions bore witness to a veritable cruelty; she was rigid to the point of being domineering. The explanation lies in the fact that her heart was never lukewarm. Hers was a strong character, without sentimentality; sword in hand.

Audacity is next-door to madness, to naïvety. Joan the Bold was also Joan the Simple. Simplicity is a weapon of high calibre. In a world given over to plots, cleverness and complication, simplicity has always gained the day; and always it is a simple action which unties a Gordian knot. The supreme manœuvre is a direct blow. Joan treated a battle as Columbus treated the egg; extremely simple, but who would have thought of it?

Her supreme virtue was her ignorance. She

knew nothing about curves or circles; for Joan, the shortest distance between two points was a straight line. She was infallible as a homing pigeon. She did not employ her intelligence; she had something better—instinct! Joan of Arc was the glorification of the instinct (and may our friends the intellectuals profit by her example). She knew nothing, nothing, nothing. She never learned the art of war; I mean the game of war, the game with rules. Her ignorance bewildered the enemy; it wasn't according to the rules. With Joan, it was never according to the rules. She cheated from simplicity. She won the battle by attacking in the centre when the rules demanded a movement on the flanks. Crass ignorance, I tell you. Joan should have been put on bread and water. Instead she conquered, she smote the English "body to body, out of the realm of France." She succeeded by mistake. All her victories were thoroughly irregular.

Instead of a brave defeat according to the rules, the naïve child preferred a faulty victory.

She would rush into battle with new eyes, with a new mind. This breath of pure air put to rout the microbes of calculation.

Simplicity breeds assurance. Assurance breeds conviction. To undertake a task with assurance is to have every chance in the world for success. Joan had faith in victory. She believed that victory was something normal and simple. Faith, as witness the Gospels, can move mountains; it is the most prodigious of all forces. In this respect Condé and Murat were the spiritual offspring of Joan. To vanquish means to believe in victory.

Her simplicity and ingenuousness were not exempt from a sort of malice. Robust grace for the body; shrewd energy for the mind. When she was cross-examined, her answers sparkled with charming details, with keen rejoinders. "In what tongue did your Voices speak?" asked Brother Seguin with a strong Auvergnat accent.—"In a better tongue than yours!"

She loved to laugh. She lived on good humour and good food. Sallies and puns came

to her naturally. Like all fundamentally good creatures, she had a dash of mockery in her soul.

Finally, at the base of her character, a sturdy, joyous and divine good sense. "The peace that the English need," she said, "is to depart into their own country." Good sense of this sort is the sense of statesmanship. She excelled in distinguishing the natural from the artificial. With a glance she pierced the situation, went straight to the kernel of affairs. Here is no question of common sense, which is the individual prostrating himself before the crowd. Common sense is pure convention. Good sense is the ability to isolate the bare truth, the elementary cell. Good sense is the universal base. Having good sense is to agree with God in one's interpretation of life. Good sense is the foundation of the mind, the foundation of the world.

Joan was the first modern general. From the beginning she understood the importance of artillery, which was then a new weapon. (And in general, to the eyes of good sense, everything is new.) Her use of the cannon

was remarkably ingenious, prudent, distinct. This is one trait which she shared with Napoleon; they were two skilled artillerymen. "*Erat multum experta in praeparatione de l'artillerie.*" (Duke of Alençon.)

Joan, all inspiration, did not neglect preparation. Before giving battle she remembered to furbish up her sword; I mean to prepare the army. This purification of the army is an essential fact. Joan endowed her troops with discipline. We have been told more than once that discipline is the chief strength of armies. This rôle of Joan's has never been sufficiently emphasized. Before she became Joan the Victorious, she was the Organizer of Victory.

What a rare mingling of all the complementary qualities! What a rare union of bodily strength with strength of soul!

Joan of Arc was the marriage of Earth and Heaven.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The King of Hearts

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The King of Hearts

THE deliverance of Orléans shook France to its roots, like a bolt of lightning. It was regarded by people, nobles and king as a miraculous manifestation, a sign from heaven. Immediately, in the fair breast of the country, the heart resumed its beat. Birds were singing on all the steeples. The air was light and fragrant. The deliverance of Orléans was Spring itself.

And the Court, with its cold, dry, measured, intriguing politicians—even the Court was moved. The two queens were in tears. The Archbishop of Rheims said masses, masses. The great captains—Richemont, La Hire, Xaintrailles—were rendered childish by joy. Always there is a great deal of childishness in happy men.

The Dauphin, this indolent, curious, super-

stitious, generally weak and moderately ugly young man, stared with wide eyes at the dazzling success and this lovely child of victory. With his own hand he wrote the Maid a letter of felicitation.

Joan was moved by his condescension. Already she was growing restless in Orléans. To souls in blossom, inaction is a winter. She was thinking of Rheims. Orléans had been the King's sword; Rheims would be his crown.

As she read his graceful message, Joan pictured the Dauphin in her imagination: a smooth, shining Dauphin, without dross or blemish. She saw him young, melancholy, his hair in curls, a line of pretty misfortune at the corner of his lips; a Dauphin all slender and charming in his cloak of royal blue, with tufts of ermine on the sleeves, with golden tassels hanging from his girdle of fine velvet; and with a sort of physical prestige wreathing the pale forehead of the Child of France.

More and more she felt herself responsible for this Child. The Voices, inside her, spoke only of Rheims. And she never ceased repeating to her friends:

"The King is made at Rheims!"

On May 15, without drum or trumpet, Joan set out for the Court, which was now at Tours. She must snatch Charles from his followers, from his pusillanimous counsellors, from human calculations. She must profit by the propitious moment, the rosy environment, the energy of circumstances. Over the prostrate bodies of the English, they must march to Rheims.

Reaching Tours, Joan knelt at the Dauphin's feet, and murmured:

"Gentle Dauphin, the Maid beseeches you to be crowned at Rheims!"

The Dauphin, standing erect, examined this girl who knelt before him. She was wearing a robe of scarlet and green, *cramoisi et vert*, the colours of the house of Orléans. It was a gift from the poet-duke,* and the green, which

* Duke Charles of Orléans, born in 1391, became the leader of the Armagnac party when his father was assassinated by the Burgundians. The English captured him at Agincourt, and for twenty-five years kept him in the Tower of London, where he passed his time writing ballades and rondeaux. After Villon he was the greatest poet of his century.

had been "gay" in the beginning and "deep" after the assassination of Duke Louis, had become a *vert perdu*, a "lost green" since the battle of Agincourt. Joan bowed her head before Majesty; and the King, from above, stared at the stormy mass of her hair, her neck all gold and copper, the top of her strong spinal column. This girl at his feet was fair of heart and body. The angel of stupefaction was perched on her rounded shoulders. All the graces of the imagination had gathered to melt in her soul. A great odour of victory and flesh rose from her body.

Charles, Charles the weak, trembling before this manifestation of energy and beauty, took her hands in his quivering hands; he drew her to her feet:

"Joan, Joan, please rise!" he said.

Then in his turn he knelt before Joan of Arc, and he kissed her feet, slowly, with a feeling of mingled love and superstition.

However, the Court hesitated to undertake the difficult expedition to Rheims. The old hacks of war, their skin smarting under a

thousand disasters, were brimming with apprehension. The clever ones were fearful lest the prestige of Orléans be lost in new encounters. Politics, naturally, would not relinquish its rights; if those of the Armagnac party murmured A, Brittany shouted Z. The ambitions of individuals were superposed on the rivalry of clans. As for the ladies, these lovely fowls with silken tails, they would never abandon the Loire, no, not for an empire.

The privy counsellors were of several minds. Some extolled the virtues of an expedition into Normandy. The Duke of Alençon urged the reconquest of his own duchy. The cowards glanced to the rear, toward La Charité, toward Meung. . . .

It is not impossible that several great personages envied Joan. Jealousy always follows in the path of triumph, like a little yellow dog.

Joan was repeating endlessly, to an old tune:

"Rheims, Rheims, to Rheims we have to go!"

Each day she made a visit to the nobles, to the King, preaching Rheims. She was lodged in the Palace. She grew familiar with this astute and narrow court, this nest of fleas, this sack of poisons, this court which might have graced some little Italian city. She was disheartened by the morals of the courtiers, the men of law, the ladies of honour. She had never read Brantôme, but Brantôme was under her eyes. All the licentiousness of the spirit, all the debaucheries of the flesh, were flourishing in this spongy soil on the banks of the Loire. There was no high villainy or strong passion; only this paltry depravity of the senses, this thin-lipped cynicism, this little orgy of pimps and blackguards to whom I could never accord either character or magnificence.

The King himself was parading his mistress at the court: Agnes Sorel. Joan abused her roundly. "These trollops," she cried frantically to the King, "will steal away your manhood and your crown." She felt that this impurity in the House of France might trouble her divine work. She tried to establish, among

these minions, the great laws of the heart and the health of the senses. She brought great swarms of Carmelites; she had them give frequent sermons. But the tactics which succeeded in the camp at Blois, among seasoned ruffians, hard and simple men, failed with these little blackguards of the court, these men of straw, these bawds of quality. This world of dry, cold hearts was inaccessible to love.

Once more Joan turned toward the Dauphin. They would pass long hours together. He found a singular pleasure in talking with her. The confidence of the Maid softened his princely heart. In the presence of this pure child of heaven he felt a strange languor which grew, day by day. A mixture of respect and sensuality divided his soul. Little by little he came to regard Joan tenderly; and suddenly the fear of sacrilege horrified his unsteady mind. Then once more the old nonchalance, sympathy, mildness crept into his eyes and his voice. He was conscious of the grandeur of this child. But his heart beat. He divined in her the mystery of Purity. But

his heart beat. He felt humble before Joan as in the face of God. But his heart beat.

Who ever could keep a heart from beating?

He was watching Joan as she faced him in a chair. His eyes were full of desire, his veins of trouble. He spoke, and his hoarse voice was lost in the depths of his trachea. He spoke and his eyes were full of desire for this lovely child of nature, with her cheeks as red as sin, her eyes as large as the sky, her throat made for the supreme lamentations of the flesh, and all her body magnificently fashioned for the great functions of Love!

One day, as they sat alone, she spoke to the King about Agnes Sorel.

"Gentle Dauphin, God does not love you!"

"And why not, Joan?"

"Because you love the daughter of Evil. You must choose: Agnes Sorel or God!"

Charles was deeply troubled. He did not dare confess, he did not dare avow to himself, that today he was a thousand times more indifferent to Agnes than to Joan. Even in his

corruption, the young prince retained a sense of the divine. No, there was never a question of love between man and woman. The feeling which moved his heart was a somewhat carnal impulse toward an inaccessible creature; an earthly gesture toward a daughter of the sky. Impulsions of this sort partake of mysticism. Unconsciously, Charles had fallen in love with a saint.

He rose, then sat on the floor at Joan's feet. He could feel electrical discharges in all his fibres, and his blood pricked like pins. He looked in Joan's eyes tenderly. He took her hands; began to caress her wrists.

"Joan, Joan," he cried, "you do not know what you are saying. Angels are pitiless and absolute; but God is all pity. God has said, 'The flesh is weak.' Jesus knows the heart of man. Joan, let Agnes rest in peace; she loves me."

He was stroking her wrists, slowly. His voice was tender and melancholy, with sharper notes at intervals. His eyes shone profoundly in the cavities of his skull. His thin Valois nose was bent like a bow. Sometimes, a ter-

rible silence. He was stroking her hands, her wrists. . . .

And, for the first time, Joan felt herself in the grip of a mysterious trouble. A new sensation was stealing through her flesh, and waves of warmth were invading all her body. A shadowy joy went coursing over her skin. In her eyes an unknown gaiety was sparkling.

"And here he kneels," she thought as she looked at Charles, "this prince I dreamed of in my cradle; this prince who moved through my childhood with velvet steps; I saved the double mirabelles for him; I vowed him my hair and the sorrows of my days; here kneels the prince who was the purpose of my life, and he is holding my hands with a fearful power. . . ."

Then, in this atmosphere of sorcery, this invasion of sweet anxieties and warm languors, Charles, in a terrible blindness, as if driven by fatal laws; Charles with a quick movement touched Joan's bosom. . . .

Her breasts were two steel springs. With one movement Joan sprang to her feet, tearing the dream into fragments as big as your

hand; rising distinct and fresh from the evil charm. She had suddenly recovered her lucidity, purity, good sense. This touch on her bosom had recalled her to consciousness and truth. She rubbed her eyes, shook her long sleeves. Henceforth the confident Maid would vanquish sin. She drew back. She cast a look at Charles, inert. Without a word she left the room. . . .

CHAPTER TWELVE

Temptation

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Temptation

THE King of France loved Joan of Arc!

The instant was solemn. At that moment, if Joan displayed the least touch of coquetry or intrigue, she would become the Queen of France. Farewell, Rheims! Hurrah for Love and the English!

Coquetry and intrigue: how small, how flat these words appear beside Joan of Arc! On leaving the King, she fled to her chamber and fell on the rug. With her head in her sleeves, her eyes obscure, her ears ringing, she lay like a bundle. Sand rolled in her head with a noise like the sea. Only the four walls halted the dispersion of her spirit. She was afraid. She felt a heart behind her, pursuing, a heart on horseback. Ambushes, traps, everywhere. Kings galloping through her veins. Love! Love!

However, little by little her spirit was appeased. Calm spread over her body like a spot of oil. She opened her eyes; folded her hands. She prayed. "God, my God, I love Thee like a piece of meat, like an August mirabelle. . . ." She prayed, and now an undulating country, a green earth was unrolled before her eyes. Erect against the background of forest, Domrémy was pouring children from its windows and cows from its gateways. An odour of milk rose from the warm stables, tickled the nostrils, melted in the sky. Domrémy, Domrémy, how Joan's little tormented heart is beating for you now! And how Joan loves you, wants you, calls you! She feels a mad desire to breathe the air of the Vosges, to turn the spinning wheel of seasoned spruce, to taste the mirabelles. Return to Domrémy, flee to Domrémy, ah, how sweet!

Suddenly she rose. She had made her decision. Her muscles were taut, short, rigid. She would steal away without a word. Out of the way, Love! Once more she would see her dog Job, pick caterpillars from the linden tree in the garden, plant carrots, kiss her

mother! Her eyes abounded in vast green landscapes.

She opened the door. She questioned the Palace with her eyes. One moment she stood there, motionless. Her heart was creaking like a rusty hinge. She was grave, tragic, with a hint of watchfulness. Yonder a scullery wench was passing; she carried a dish of roast kid. A bat was wheeling, pale and black under the vault. Joan did not move. It was the psychological moment of hesitation, doubt. Here the smallest event would take the proportions of an omen, of fate itself. The least atom of chance would swing the balance.

Joan meditated. Her mission, France, God? And the Saints . . . they had left her in the lurch. Nobody inscribed her duty, her instructions on the wall. She was alone, alone on the threshold of the door. . . .

And suddenly she melted into tears. To melt is the proper term. She wept through all the pores of her skin, violently, inexhaustibly. She had closed the door, drawn back into her chamber. She wept in torrents, in a sort of joyous abundance, with sobs, hiccups and fits

of trembling. She wiped her eyes, blew her nose; all was over. The die was cast. The pyre had won over the meadow; Rouen had vanquished Domrémy. . . .

She remained. But she wished to leave the court without delay. While the expedition to Rheims was being prepared, she resolved to deliver the strong places of the Loire.

Setting out for Romorantin, she managed to drag La Hire and the maréchal de Rais along with her. There, in this little city south of the Loire, they gathered a small force of hand-picked ruffians. On June 11 they opened the campaign.

They marched on Jargeau. At this moment Joan was all ardour. Her nervous breakdown had given way to incomparable energy, passion and acuity. "Are your spurs sharp?" she asked her soldiers. It was a period of breakage and madness. She flew toward the enemy. "Were they hanging to the clouds, we should take them!" she exclaimed. At Jargeau she rushed to the ramparts. She cried to Suffolk,

the English governor of the city: "Surrender, or it will go ill with you!" Then she howled: "Sound, trumpets. Gentle Duke, to the assault! Friends, friends, on, on!" Jargeau was taken, Suffolk made prisoner, four hundred English slain.

On June 15 they attacked Meung. But the English, in terror, adopted new tactics. They abandoned the city without fighting, and buried themselves in the plains of Beauce.* An army is invisible in a field of wheat.

At Beaugency, the same tactics. The English garrison slunk off into the fog. Knights, yeomen, grooms, horses, they stole away, slipped between the fingers like so many eels, hid themselves in the vast plains of wheat.

The enemy abandoned Janville and Patay in succession. Not another *goddam* left in the cities. They burrowed into the plains of Beauce like rats in a hole. From now on, they became intangible. The war was turning into hide-and-seek.

* "Rich as a farm in Beauce." It is a rolling and fertile plain, covered with wheat, which lies to the north of Orléans. In those days it served as the granary of Paris.

Joan was disappointed and exasperated. Her nerves, stretched to the breaking point for ten days, suddenly relaxed. She felt the need of action, this alibi of the heart. The period of exaltation was followed by a period of dejection. Suddenly, all her energies collapsed; she became the prey of summer.

The warm land of Touraine, in June, is full of breezes whose languor and enchantment are beyond compare. The soil is a factory of perfumes. Under the kisses of a dense, subtle, profound light, the fields enter a period of tender ferment. A long wind, laden with water and flowers, caresses, impregnates people and things, the hills, the trees, the turtledoves. Without pause, from the copses and vineyards, burst cries of joy and signs of life. The air is soft, fresh, clinging as a woman's dress. The clouds roll like pleasure gondolas at Venice. The raw-leaved poplars are bending under the weight of the sky. Everything contributes to the spectacle of the earth's content.

The army, languishing, rode through the rustling grain. The tired horses let their tails

droop on the peach espaliers. The men were gorging themselves with fruit, which did not fail to cause intestinal disorders.

Joan felt that her soul was melting, her flesh was melting in the air. Joan, a daughter of the soil, was always keenly sensitive to the forces and graces of nature.

Toward noonday, they made a halt. Joan sank down in the shadow of a tree. She removed her armour. Her bosom was overburdened with the sun; her breasts were heavy and damp. Gilles de Rais * was lying near by. Already he was sleeping like a great white dishevelled child; and Joan, as in a dream, stared at his flat, hard breast. It was impassive and alluring, the breast of a soldier glowing with youth; a sharp, empty, unmouldable and unattainable breast; a rigid breast which might break with the weight of desire, but would never bend; which bred the wish to stave it in like a barrel or a secret, to break it

* Gilles de Rais (or de Retz) was a hero as long as he followed Joan of Arc; afterwards he began to waste his patrimony, and resorted to black magic to win it back. The officers who came to arrest him found the bones of two hundred children in his castle. Rais was the Blue Beard of the legend.

like a plate; a firm male breast where through the dry skin one could touch the muscles, the nerves, the ribs, the heart!

And what a handsome lad he was, in those early days, this future Blue Beard! He slept with his mouth half-open to the sky, as if expecting some mystical dove. His pink young face, his fresh cheeks, seemed to be nourished with candour, ambrosia and prime beef. His torso, drunk with health, agreed with all the laws of composition and plenitude. He was beardless, tender, informed with grace and strength. From his long lashes, smooth as the gills of fish, to his long fingers as slender as a blackbird's feet, everything bore witness to his accomplished grace; and everything breathed this harmony of thick substance with slender joints by which one may recognize the man of privilege. In this young man, and for a moment only, the red juices of the earth had made alliance with the fragrance of flowers. He slept, a bit of miracle, an assembly of chosen atoms, a mingled heap of soul and body; he slept, insensible under the sun. . . .

And now Joan herself began to slumber. Her blonde hair was a pile of honey on the grass. Her face in the sunlight was deeply flushed, and her damp body was resting in the dampness of the soil. She dreamed, and as she dreamed her body was twitching strangely. She dreamed that the Dauphin kissed her.

She woke brusquely, violently. She raised her body from the grass, wiped her forehead and looked about her. The men were overcome with heat and slumber; they lay noisily in a brute disorder. Over the army, a wind from the clover and osiers was scattering its tons of honey. Swarms of mosquitoes went humming through the air; they swooped into the eyes of the horses, lying on the sand. Joan felt the bite of an insect on her abdomen. A steeple in the distance was sunning itself like a white lizard. She fell into a revery. Why had she dreamed of the Dauphin? Did she love the Dauphin? Love? What is Love? She recalled a thousand details, one by one. Just out of the cradle, she had imagined a blue Dauphin, a Dauphin like a doll. At six, she represented the Dauphin as a little golden

boy, dressed in flowers and stars. Later he was a youth in a velvet pourpoint, melancholy under the weight of his misfortunes. At night in the village, sitting before the fire, when she heard the Dauphin mentioned she would blush timidly and weep into the ashes. It was for the Dauphin that she prayed under the lindens; it was of the Dauphin that Catherine and Margaret had spoken; it was because of the Dauphin that she left her mother! Ah! little Dauphiness, what love is this which is stronger than love for your mother?

Joan became troubled and shameful under the vast glow of the sky. She hid her scarlet face against her legs; she closed her eyes. Her breast rose and fell desperately. She felt tired and weak. She was afraid. She was afraid of her body.

She rose, donned her armour, leaped on her horse. An order: the trumpets began to sound, the drums to roll. Her soldiers woke and grumbled; they were surly and spiteful as they formed their ranks in the midst of heat and insomnia. They set out. An army of sleep and iron dragged heavily through the

eternal grain. They rode in a sort of spell across this long and tedious Beauce, plunging ahead with minds and bodies numb. On these men, already prey to weariness and disappointment, the sun's grip was terrible. Not an Englishman on the horizon; nothing to revive the taste for energy and death in these drowsy bodies. They rode mechanically, their harness limp, their loins soft, amid these plains of cereals and sand, advancing in a hollow silence. Marches and countermarches deep in the solitudes of the sun!

Little by little the men were seized with a sort of dizziness, an irritation of nerves and brain. The sky and the blood in their bodies were heavy as lead. The horses leapt madly under the pricking spurs. Voices had grown more febrile, and gestures more stupefying. The senses were troubled by a sort of mirage; the mind disturbed by traps and suspicions. Horses rearing, arms clashing, men shouting, everything helped to exasperate this army without an adversary, this force without an object. Joan, nervous and excited, was riding in the van; her eyes glued on the horizon, her

teeth clenched, her arms heavy with gestures of death. Spurring her horse till the blood came, she raged against the drunken grooms, cursing horribly. Like a marauding soldier, "her oath was now 'By God, by God!' " says the registrar Delphinal.

The army had been marching for ten hours. It was one of those moments when human energies explode, having found no outlet. The dykes of reason were crumbling away. Toward evening Joan surprised some of her Scottish archers in the act of looting a farm. One of them was setting fire to the ricks; others had taken the chickens and were wringing their necks; others were staving in great casks of white wine; a strapping rascal, in the corner, was ravishing some red-faced wench. Joan had all these brigands hanged in haste. She felt the pressing need of blood. They marched on. Little by little the horses were falling into a gallop. The foot-soldiers were running at top speed. Their motion was growing wilder, from moment to moment, in a sort of cinema. A fabulous madness had taken hold of this army drunk with the sun. Then

suddenly, there, near Patay, the English army. . . .

A brute cry, a death cry, burst from all their breasts; a hoarse grunt of bodily relief:

"Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!"

The whole delirious mob came tumbling down on the English. Joan, in the front rank, was stabbing and slashing in a panic of joy, like a formidable automaton. She slaughtered Englishmen by the dozen. At last the dark indecision of her flesh was washed clean in blood. . . .

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

On, On, On!

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On, On, On!

AFTER Patay, the war became a game. When the dog is slain, the wolf has leisure to carry off the weak ewes, the smallest lambs.

Finally the army of the coronation had been assembled. Joan returned to the court, then dragged it away to join the army. Charles was marching at last!

The Voices from the sky were telling Joan, "Daughter of Heaven, on, on, on!" (*Deposition of Dunois*, pp. 11 and 12.) No details. No secrets. On, on, on! What need of entangling oneself in strategy, in plans made of ink and saliva, in calculations soft as cheese? What need of schedules, conferences and compromise? Action will always upset the finest house of cards. As for these sages, men of law and thinkers; all these clever people:—

chance in the form of a kick sends them off to the devil.

Genius never bothers itself with tricks.

Joan's place is at the side of Pascal, of Danton, of Nietzsche.

La Trémoille was a man of trickery and straw. At the last moment he tried in vain to put sand in the wheels; to object that there was a multitude "of walled cities, of castles and strongholds, well garrisoned with English and Burgundians, between the said town of Gien and Rheims"; the Maid replied:

"They can go to the devil!" (Cagny, p. 18.)

The Maid was like Bayard, but masculine and active; Bayard was like the Maid, but feminine and passive. Bayard was the man of defence; Joan the woman of attack.

At last, on June 29, the army of the coronation set out for Rheims. The Dauphin led the van, surrounded by the high nobility and the great captains: the Duke of Alençon; the counts of Clermont, Vendôme, Laval and Boulogne; the Bastard of Orléans; Rais and Saint-Sévère, the two marshals; Culant, the admiral;

finally Thouars, Sully, la Trémoille, Jamet du Tillay, La Hire and Xaintrailles. In all there were twelve thousand soldiers . . . and Joan of Arc.

"Daughter of Heaven, on, on, on!" She advanced, and "all the strongholds on one side and the other of her path surrendered to her mercy." By mere show of force, they captured Auxerre, Saint-Florentin, Brinon and Saint-Phal. Troyes tried to resist. These noble Trojans, to hear them boast, "were ready to resist till death inclusively." Bah! the "inclusively" was hardly needed. "Before three days have passed," Joan cried, "either by love or force, we will enter Troyes." The artillery was drawn up; the fascines piled under the walls. On the following day, Troyes surrendered.

July 15, they entered Châlons-sur-Marne.

July 16, they entered Rheims.

July 17, coronation of the King of France.

The Cathedral of Rheims was flaming with columns and incense. An innumerable throng

was crying *Noël! Noël!* The trumpets sounded in great blasts. The Armagnac band struck up the Marseillaise. Through the half-open windows, doves came soaring on easy wings into the whiteness, their wings laden with love and sunlight. The vaults of lime-stone blossomed with emotion; echoed with the roll of drums. In the nave a child was weeping, tirelessly, expressing through his two small eyes the tears of all the throng. Latin syllables were clinging to men's throats, went rolling through the arches. The carbonic acid of respiration troubled the air and the heart. It was one of those pathetic moments when the very stones took flight, on their heavy wings. . . .

Joan, during the whole ceremony, stood by the high altar, at the side of the King, holding her banner in her hand.

"It has shared in the travail," she said, "and to share in the honour is only just."

Suddenly the crowd rose, on their toes, on chairs, almost on wings. Men and women breathed with violence, were stupefied with enthusiasm, clapped their hands, stamped

their feet. And, while thousands of eyes glowed like torches in the background, the Archbishop of Rheims, in the midst of silence, placed the royal crown on the head of Charles VII.

At this moment Joan threw herself in tears at the feet of the King, kissing his knees. But Charles raised her gently and there, solemnly, facing the people of France, crowning the history of France, the King of France kissed Joan of Arc.

The following morning, Joan woke at five o'clock. The room was light already. On July 18, the sun rises at 4:07. She felt pains at the roots of her hair and in her soul. The morning after glory is like all mornings-after.

She rinsed her face and hands. Her neck was aching and heavy, her eyes red. From the depths of her stomach, in sharp spasms, came the desire to vomit. Her face was a grimace, twisted with pain, the face of someone taking medicine. . . .

She felt extraordinarily empty, her hands empty, her stomach empty, her head empty; she was in this state of absolute, delighted and pessimistic vacuity which one feels after reading a great book or after the act of love. Every cessation is sad; every completion is infinitely sad.

She was aware of being at an end, the end. Now that the King was crowned, her task was completed. The King. . . . She remembered his accolade of the day before; the feel of his lips against her cheeks. Love! What is Love? . . .

She had a physical desire for pure air, calm, nature. The sun, the germicidal sun. . . . Always after great nervous shocks, battles, coronation, the fleshly, unspoiled peasant girl in Joan felt the vital need of turning back to her sources in nature. Daughter of Heaven; yes, and Daughter of the Soil.

She left the house. She was lodging at the sign of the Cat and Kittens. At this hour of morning the street was clean, cool, deserted. The water ran so pure in the gutters that pigeons came there to wash their wings. A little

dew was blanching the gable-ends; a little sky was touching the porticos with blue. Earth and heaven, in the shadow of the dawn, were locked in one embrace.

Joan walked in the middle of the street, at an equal distance from the left and the right, balanced on the morning. She left Rheims behind. Now she was lost in unconsciousness and space, following a chalky road. The day was fair, immutably fair. . . . The short chalky hills, the plains of clay and limestone, were unrolled like a travelogue of wheat, vineyards and sugar-beets. A few clouds of salt went marching through the sky, clearly, melodiously. This dry, hard, delicate land of Champagne was all wings, all rays. The sparkle of wines and winds!

Joan continued her way, and little by little this combination of airy forces and living ardours invaded every part of her, stealing into her ears, her mouth; penetrating her lungs and her spinal marrow. All nature was engulfed in her flesh. She felt that she was the child of things, the prey of eternal Matter. Her feet moved to a rhythm which sprang from the

horizon. The powers of nature were taking possession of her unconscious body.

Suddenly, on a milestone, she read:

DOMRÉMY, 80 miles

The road to Domrémy! She was marching along the road to Domrémy! Beyond the horizon the Vosges were calling her, expecting her. She trembled, blushed. She looked at the road. She gathered a little dust in the hollow of her hand, weighed it, sniffed it. Now she stared at the horizon, opened her eyes wide and tried to see, in the depth of perspective, the church-steeple of her childhood.

And once more her limbs felt occult commands. All her muscles were impassioned; the soles of her feet were insatiable. In Joan, this morning of July, the reflex was king. A flight of the conscious mind before the invasion of Instinct!

She had been walking for an hour. Rheims had disappeared in the background. The sun climbed, dilating her eyes, swelling her throat. She strode on, without object, without aim,

breathing the wind from the east, the firm wind of Lorraine. . . .

The call of the soil! The obedience of its child!

A flock of sheep was grazing by the roadside. Joan stopped. Tears came to her eyes. She caressed an humble ewe, and the touch of the wool burned her hands. Ewe, ewe of Domrémy! . . . She laughed heartily and bent over, kissing the ewe on its woolly back.

Then she set off again, with fresh legs. Farther on she drank a little water from a spring in the grass. The water tasted of Domrémy. She gathered the flowers of the field, made a bouquet, stuck it in her hair. She abandoned herself entirely to the great call of the soil. Her feet were automatic; her thighs functioned involuntarily. She walked with ease, swinging her hips, her eyes half-closed, her blood content. It was all a dream, a game, a fable. All things conspired together. Everything was dragging her, everything carrying her toward Domrémy. That morning all nature, with an imperceptible motion, was tending toward Domrémy. The road bent toward Dom-

rémy. The birds sang over Domrémy. The trees grew to Domrémy. The clouds in the sky were flying toward Domrémy. It seemed that everything was bound for Domrémy; that everything led to Domrémy. . . .

Joan walked forward with great steps. She began to hasten. Little by little her walk became a race.

It seemed that something in her was *fleeing* some other thing. . . . It seemed that her Instinct was fleeing her Destiny.

No longer does Heaven command; it is now the flesh which orders: On, on, on!

Ah, this tragic flight of *flesh* from *fire*.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Hind at Bay

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The Hind at Bay

AND having attained the summit. . . .
The summit was Orléans. Rheims was still among the heights. Compiègne follows after Rheims; and after Compiègne, Rouen.

Joan was discovered late that morning, stretched on the road about twelve miles from Rheims, lying in a swoon. The King had been warned of her absence, and launched a troop of cavalry at her heels. She lay in the dust, overcome by sun-stroke. Her nose bled drop by drop, feeding a brave red puddle in the road. Three blue-bottle flies were crawling over her cheeks. High in the air, a single crow.

They revived her, washed her, caressed her. They carried her back to Rheims, tired and sick. . . .

Charles showed the greatest condescension; he came to see her. But the Maid was recovering already. Ended, the mirage. She ate a few slices of roast kid; swallowed a few goblets of champagne; now she was ready for action.

She advised striking toward the North, without delay. All the towns from Soissons to Beauvais were eager to surrender. The fruit was ripe; it was theirs for the picking. Laon had sent its keys to the King. Forward!

But the King, already, was weary. This life of battles was far less attractive than his life of pleasure, on the banks of the Loire. To live on horseback, to capture cities was boring. Long live the little courtiers in stiff velvet, the mild Anjou wine, the madcap girls of Touraine! As for camps, marches through the hills, councils of war, never! Charles was a king made for the Loire; he was King of the Loire!

And the court was worthy of the King. The courtiers feared Joan. The safety of France . . . what about it? They were disturbed only by questions of money, which has no

fatherland. War empties the treasury; down with war! And so they schemed and intrigued, wasting at Rheims the moral profits of the coronation. Some were afraid of offending the Duke of Burgundy; so the politic ones. Others trusted only in negotiations; so the clever ones. Meanwhile the sensualists were dreaming of the Loire.

La Trémoille and the Maid were like two communicating vessels. If Joan rose in prestige, La Trémoille fell. And so. . . .

Joan wished to strike toward the North. The Privy Council agreed on a retreat toward Château-Thierry, straight to the South, toward Montmirail and Provins.

From Provins to the town of Gien, on the Loire, is only a matter of sixty miles. No more than a step. And what a temptation to make that step, slink off, rejoin one's lares and penates! Sixty miles and they would be on the Loire, their feet toasting by their own firesides! The King and the court were of one mind. Charles tried to cross the Seine at Braye, but alas! Braye closed its gates. Charles failed to carry the town. Farewell, Touraine!

He must turn his face to the North, toward glory!

One fine morning, being exasperated by so many weak manœuvres, Joan took flight. In the company of her partisans, including the Duke of Alençon and a few of the captains, she deserted the main body of the army and plunged straight for Paris. Confusedly she felt that only a great blow, like the capture of Paris, could save her, save all.

The fact is absurd and disgraceful, but henceforth the King of France would be Joan's chief adversary. The English came second, and were a simple problem. Her essential task was to conquer Charles; the weakness, inertia, cowardice and treachery of Charles.

It is August 26. Joan is under the walls of Paris. She rides forward, with a very few companions. In front of the Porte Saint-Honoré, she halts:

"Open! Open in the name of France!"

Joan, Joan the Shrewd, had never dreamed of taking Paris by force. This show of arms could hardly be called a physical attack; it

was a moral offensive. Joan's mind was swift and her body swift; the two went together, one astride the other. She hoped, by this demonstration under the walls of Paris, to cause a popular insurrection, a rebellion of the French. Joan was counting on the people, the people first and always.

The gate opened suddenly. To the sound of English trumpets, a young woman rode over the drawbridge; she was blonde, and armed from head to foot. The heralds cried:

"Miss Malcolm!"

England also, jealous of Joan's laurels, was determined to have its Maid.

The English Maid advanced toward Joan, sword in hand. They hurled defiance at each other. The people of Paris, massed on the ramparts, were watching the two champions. A hint of tenderness stole somehow into hearts and walls.

Miss was blonde, Miss was golden, Miss was fresh as all the English misses. She raised her vizor, and the bloom of her cheeks against their frame of steel recalled the rare beefsteaks of the Mansion House, in London. She was

strong, muscular, and her vast blue eyes were on the scale of her body. Perhaps a little plump, but what the devil! (may all English misses pardon me!) I like a bold touch of plumpness. There are certain bodily and manual graces which only fat women possess. A lock of hair was flying from her temple in a golden plume. Miss, Miss, I don't know whether you are or aren't a maid, but certainly you are a lovely amazing creature, a flower in the flesh!

The two women chose their ground and the fight began. A swordstroke touched Joan's horse, cropped one of its ears, and it reared with its great hooves. Miss was wounded in the shoulder; a thrust under her epaulière. The two maids fought unceasingly; Miss with a false air of indifference, a keen languor; Joan with all her strength, with all her heart, with all her body. Suddenly Miss wavered and slipped, touched in the neck; blood was dripping on her horse's mane. The English ran to her aid. On their side the French, believing Joan to be in danger, rushed into the fight. Little by little the battle spread. The Eng-

lish, slowly, holding Miss by the arms, retired into the shelter of the ramparts. The die was cast. Joan cried, "To the ladders!" and the French attacked in ludicrous numbers.

"By the Rood," Joan cried, "I'll take this wench of a town!"

She helped to raise a ladder and was the first to climb. Suddenly an arrow sank into her thigh. She fell.

Her soldiers bore her away. Twilight was falling. The captains gave order to sound the retreat.

Paris, farewell!

From that day Joan was soured, in mortal dejection. These failures, this inertia of the court had chilled her soul. In her own heart she felt that Rheims was the end of her mission; that henceforth her fate would be the same as for other mortals. She fell into confusion and distress. She doubted herself. Her natural ardour, her spontaneous zeal, her firm character alone persisted. Faith was lacking.

She felt that heaven and earth had aban-

doned her. The royal army was disbanding in Touraine. Joan returned to the court, but found she had no more credit with the Privy Council. They threw her aside, like a sucked orange. From day to day she became more shrewish, cruel, evil-tempered. She struck her servants, slaughtered her enemies. She was the animal which feels at the end of its resources, vowed to destruction, the hind at bay!

She was passing through sharp crises of violence and dejection. Sometimes the disorder of her mind would affect her body. Joan the divine, in moments like these, was prey to a sort of demon. She burst forth in terrible harangues, and sometimes acted with the brutality of the lowest ruffian. One day, with the flat of her sword, she pursued a band of trollops; she struck so hard that her weapon, the sword of Saint Catherine, shattered in her hands.

And suddenly, without transition, she threw herself on the ground, rolled in her own tears, clawed at her face and her heart.

At night she had fearful visions, unending

sweats. She dreamed of the gallows and the stake. She had the weaknesses of a little child. A strange relaxation dissolved her muscles, destroyed her best resources. She would waken with a start, moist and fetid. . . .

In two months she lost fifteen pounds.

One fine morning, when she woke, the taste for struggle set her teeth on edge. All her blood was boiling. Again she left the court, with a few men. She was trying to escape from destiny.

She went plunging from right to left, from north to south. It was the period of zigzags. Looking at the map one is struck by these cross-hatchings, this angular trail; by the similarity which exists between these short, rash, uncontrollable journeys and the wild coursings, the feintings and loopings of a hind harried by the pack.

Joan rushed from Paris to Bourges, from Bourges to La Charité. The siege of La Charité was dragging. Joan hurried off. At Mehun-sur-Yèvre she tried to assault the heart of the King. The King's heart was closed. Meanwhile at court they were trying to soften

the Maid, with jewels, patents of nobility and epaulettes. They feasted her: "Purchase of six capons, nine partridges, thirteen lampreys and one pheasant for a gift to the Maid." They were trying to change her into a court lady.

And Joan surrendered herself, if only for a moment. She was tired, at the end of her resources. The calm of the court, the softness of the air, flattery: all tempted her willing flesh. She was invaded by a sea of sweetness and sentimentality. Every day she said a thousand Ave Marias. She recalled her deeds of violence, and was ashamed. Her soul on every side was open to remorse. Joan was an empty stronghold.

The sight of the King filled her with terror. She remembered that day in Chinon, that moment of royal seduction. There was no doubt that he had never alluded to this gesture, which must have been involuntary. The superstitious king was afraid to love a saint. But a gesture, an act leaves a record which time cannot erase. What is Love? . . .

Sometimes Joan had fits of pity, a ridicu-

lous tenderness. She would seek out the little children and caress them breathlessly. By dint of touching and mingling, she felt confusedly that something of their purity, from skin to skin, was passing into her own flesh.

She felt a great need of water, and washed repeatedly. Every morning she would take a bath in the Loire, to whiten body and soul.

One fine day, the wind changed. Ended, her weakness. Joan escaped from the court in the evening and galloped all night, in a sort of divine fury, drunk with motion and stars. She threw herself into Lagny-sur-Marne. The town was beleaguered by Franquet d'Arras, a partisan of Burgundy. She bore him back, made him prisoner, ordered his execution with fierce delight. . . . Ah! once more this odour of blood, strong to the strong!

She learned that the Duke of Burgundy was laying siege to Compiègne. "By the Rood," she cried, "I'll visit my good friends of Compiègne." And she threw herself into Compiègne. It was one of those hours when man hungers and thirsts after danger; when, with voracity, he crunches death between his teeth;

one of those bewildering hours when man goes wildly coursing after his Destiny!

On the very evening of her entry into the city, she went rushing through the streets, her throat bare, haranguing the mob. She managed to carry a few hundred men along with her. They made a desperate sally. They charged the Burgundians; bore them back. Joan led the van; she was far in advance of her men. Suddenly she noticed that she was almost alone. Her companions, furtively, one after the other, were retiring into Compiègne. The enemy regained courage; they returned in greater numbers. Now there are only a few men supporting Joan, her own military household. She draws back, still overawing the enemy; back, slowly back . . . she has reached the rampart, the drawbridge. . . .

At this moment the bridge was raised (by order of Guillaume de Flavy, the Governor; let us seek the reason. Flavy commanded Compiègne in the name of La Trémoille; La Trémoille was the craftiest, most cowardly enemy of the Maid; but enough. . . .)

Joan of Arc was alone, alone in the horde of her foes. At bay! The hind at bay!

Her sword whirled on every side. Suddenly, from the rear, a giant, "a huge man and fierce," seized her by the legs and pulled her down from the horse. . . .

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A Soul That Wavers

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A Soul That Wavers

JOAN OF ARC a prisoner! Burgundians and English were immeasurably delighted by this booty. John of Luxemburg, who had made the capture, treasured her like the apple of his eye. He carried her to Marigny, a few leagues from Compiègne. The Duke of Burgundy in person came to see her. He felt her hands, touched her hair. Every one marvelled to see that this thunder of war, this demon, this saint was nothing after all but a girl, a girl of eighteen.

Ah! yes, Joan of Arc was an eighteen-year-old girl, in silk stockings, wearing a *cloche*. We must imagine her under our eyes, touch her with our hands. To imagine means to rejuvenate. She is a stenographer, or perhaps a shop girl at the *Galeries Lafayette*. She leaves her home; she commands the French

armies; she conquers Europe and Asia. This is the true Joan of Arc.

From Marigny, John of Luxemburg had the Maid removed to his castle of Beaulieu. She was an object of curiosity. The guard was slipshod and lazy. A young girl! They entertained no fears of her escape. One day this girl, in a flash, locked her jailers in her own cell and stole away. She found two great planks which hid her face; then she strolled out of the castle, whistling. An inconceivable mixture of audacity and good sense. There was also—may one add?—a basis of purely feminine wile. She stepped across the drawbridge, indolently. It was all in vain; she was recognized by the porter of Beaulieu; stopped; led back to her prison. . . .

As result of this attempt to escape, Joan was transferred to the Castle of Beaurevoir, an inaccessible stronghold on the shore of the North Sea.

Joan was movement, joy, sap, strength, life. She was a parcel of the world still animated by the vast universal rhythm. Joan and the world are inconceivable under the aspect (or, as Spinoza would say, under the "species") of immobility, imprisonment. Only motion can give them balance, unity, life; it is motion which binds, orders and solidifies the framework of the planets. If for a single moment universal gravitation ceased to function, what an avalanche of stars through eternal space!

Movement is the soul of the world, Joan's soul.

Joan in prison is a denial of nature, a physical impossibility. To escape would be her most elementary, vital and Joanesque reaction; a cry of the instinct and the blood.

Joan tended toward liberty with all her weight, as a plummet tends to the vertical.

And she made no secret of her intentions. Her good sense was in harmony with her temperament. She said naïvely that "never in any place was she prisoner that she would not willingly escape." Of course, of course!

With Joan, one must always say, "Of course."

Beaurevoir was not Beaulieu. They locked Joan in a donjon-keep twenty yards above the ground. Two archers guarded the door of her cell. Only once a day, in the evening, was she allowed to leave her dungeon, her bed of straw, and to breathe the air for a few moments from the summit of the tower, on the battlements.

Little by little, under this sedentary life, the sound body of the Maid became subject to lassitude and irritation. A yellowish unhealthy fat began to creep into her muscles. Often a sudden congestion, a rush of blood would attack her constitution. Her circulation was losing its rhythm. Her flesh was deteriorating in its essence. The functioning of her joints became disordered. All her nature —organs and nerves—was being profoundly corrupted.

The forces imprisoned within her body, deprived of an outlet, demanded a fierce deliv-

erance. Cataracts of blood went rolling through her motionless veins. All the dammed-up energy of her body was pressing against the sluice-gates of her soul.

The solitude and silence led to stupor. Her brain was clogged with a host of martial dreams. A phenomenal need of movement, life was boiling in her arteries, in her spinal marrow, in all her body from the pads of her feet to the top of her cranium. In the shadows she gnawed her fingernails with tigerish teeth. Sometimes she would burst into shrieks, into terrible laughter, only for the pleasure and liberation of her vocal cords.

O tragic struggle of this powerful soul in the grasp of annihilation. Strife of this sword in the scabbard against slow rust! Nightmare of frustrated energy! Her body, this body made for leaping and feats of horsemanship, was rearing in revolt against immobility. But even more than the body, Joan's soul was held imprisoned. There was something concentric in this moral torment, something which recalled the torture of the wheel.

It was a total loss of balance, a fundamental

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difference in level; it was a drama of emptiness.

Tons of steam in a closed vessel; myriads of catastrophes!

Every twenty-four hours, five minutes of relief-valve, of flight, of sky; this short daily walk along the summit of the tower, around the battlements.

From above, Joan used to stare at the France she had loved so much; no, that she loved still. France, before her eyes, was a field of beets, a hedge bounding a square of hops; farther on, two horses harnessed to the plow, a great crow cutting diagonals. France was a little corner of the country, a field that smelled of mother, soul, and verdure.

On the other side, the sea, the North Sea.

One day, when the air was exceptionally clear, Joan caught a glimpse of the English coast at the edge of the horizon. She blushed with pleasure and with hate. Here at last was the land of her enemies! She clenched her fists against this flat country, this little line of fog and chalk; she hurled these imprecations:

"England, land of the Angles, land of milk, bishops and coal, strong and twisted island, firm and implacable, crouched in the centre of your cold Ocean, with long teeth in your pink mouth and pale flowers on your women in the mist; England of pearly skins and icy hearts, England without ardour or greatness, without fire or love, I condemn you among the lands of all the earth, England!"

At the beginning Joan retained some hope, in spite of her physical weakness. She counted on her Voices, on a dashing raid by La Hire, on the King of France. But the days were passing without the sign of a bird, without the sign of a king.

What she feared most was to be sold to the English. This idea maddened her. "I had rather die," she said, "than be sold into the hands of the English."

As time dragged on, her fears became sharper, more bitter. Little by little they developed into a veritable obsession. At night she would dream of being in the power of the

English, in an English city, in the midst of an English mob. Her Voices, even; her Voices told her that "she would not be delivered before she had seen the King of the English."

One day she learned that Cauchon, the Bishop of Beauvais, had arrived at Beaurevoir. Immediately she convinced herself that he had come to make arrangements for her sale. He would carry her off to England. Ah, no, any torture, but not the English!

She was in desperation. All day she would eat nothing. An idea, a tenacious idea, was creeping into her brain, and growing stronger as her body wasted away:

To flee, to escape, *at any price!*

That evening, when the time came for her walk on the ramparts, she was very weak. Her pulse beat shamelessly. She climbed the stairs to the tower with little steps, a pale insect against the vast stone.

At the summit, the pure air, flooding her warm lungs, made her dizzy. She breathed heavily, twice. She was leaning against the parapet, and her terrible eyes were plunging

into space. An unavowable impulse was drawing her toward immensity, toward annihilation.

She stared at this bit of nature she loved so well, these fields whose substance she felt in her flesh, this air which from all eternity had been conceived for her bosom, this sky which was only the enlargement of her eyes. Of all this free and strong space, of all this matter and all this life, she felt herself the Centre and the Reason. She was completely welded to the universe, by a sort of intimate and general adherence. The cattle grazing in a field called her by name, and a little virgin cloud beckoned her like a sister. An immemorial attraction rose from all this yawning immensity. To melt, to melt oneself in eternal things! Everything before her eyes was smile, attraction, aspiration. Everything was inviting her, hailing her, commanding and convoking her. Truly, there was nothing which separated her from this sunny domain which was her element; to which she was destined as the part is destined to the whole. Nothing separated her from the world, from the lovely immensity

. . . nothing but a gesture, a vague movement, hardly a step. . . .

There she was standing, her heart full of the infinite, her eyes drunk with space, her arms outstretched toward the vast Earth of sorcery and fascination . . . she was there . . . and suddenly a bundle of womanhood fell into space, rolled through the intoxication of evening against the side of the donjon, in a spiral; a little formless thing subject to the laws which govern falling bodies. . . .

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Lull Before Storm

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Lull Before Storm

THE soil was sandy and covered with weeds. When they came to recover her body, they found Joan in a faint, but with no grave injuries. A few bruises on her loins and face. The moral shock, however, was beyond repair. Henceforth, in her nature, there was something broken, beaten: the sanguine ardour, the tensing of muscles, the spontaneous verve which welled from her great peasant body.

A checkmate for the body, a checkmate for the blood; henceforth the soul reigned supreme.

She felt remorse. Her act, her troubled gesture striped with temptation and despair, filled her with fear, with the unknown. The mere idea of suicide horrified her strong mind. She confessed and received absolution. When

the priest left her, she felt young, fresh, vegetative.

After the aberration of the flesh and the supreme spasm of the nerves came a period of peace, a period of God.

And now Joan was all calm, all faith. She abandoned herself to the forces of heaven, to her interior life, to the Voices. Does this spiritual appeasement show weakness, a diminution of her will? Or does it rather demand the powerful image of the lion mocking his own strength?

Her wounds and contusions healed quickly. At the end of three days, Joan was fully recovered.

The negotiations for her delivery to the English were being rapidly concluded. The Maid was bought for 10,000 francs; "as much," said Cauchon, "as one would give for a king or prince, according to the custom of France."

Monseigneur Cauchon! Here at last is this worthy Cauchon, whose very name—Cauchon, *cochon*, pig—was a magnificent discovery of fate! Here is your bishop with a donkey's

soul, your bastard of Judas, your pig of History!

He was penniless, ungrateful, harsh, with the pride of a goat and the ambition of a lichen. There was no great current of force or rascality in this meagre, embittered soul, this hard and petty mind, this cut-and-dried theologian. He led the life of a poor devil, a life like Julian Sorel's, with periods of good fortune, sharp plunges into adversity, and generally an air of imperishable meanness. A succession of pomps and poverties. Rector of the University of Paris, then driven from Paris; Bishop of Beauvais, then driven from Beauvais. It was always his lot to be dismissed. There was a touch of the valet in Cauchon.

The bargain was struck toward the end of October. In November, Joan left Beaurevoir. Slowly, slowly, to the rhythm of tortures and funeral processions; passing Arras, Drugy, Crotoy, Saint-Valéry, Eu, Dieppe, these Stations of the Cross, she was led to Rouen.

During all the journey, her calm and resignation were extreme. It was the still sea after a hurricane; the great peace which follows ex-

plosions and disasters. Forgetting her military life, she returned to her childhood; she took refuge in her pastoral memories; gave herself over to natural forces, to the charms of the hour and the weather.

She rode in a two-wheeled springless cart, drawn by a little gray mule, with an escort of fifteen men-at-arms. They journeyed leisurely, sometimes at a walk, sometimes at a trot, through the winter landscapes of the North, under a sky of fog and ashes. These November skies are soaked with tears. . . .

When they climbed a hill, the little gray mule—he was a beast of no great value, raised among the dunes—would rear and snort, sweaty and obstinate. The driver, a coarse red man from Mâcon, in the lands of the Duke of Burgundy, would hammer the mule's back with the handle of his whip. There were oaths and blows, a sanguinary dispute. The beast was starved and unwilling; the man strong by virtue of his arms and office. The cart stood still.

Then Joan would leap to the ground, take the mule by the bridle and—hey, Jack, gid-

dap, giddap—the cart would somehow climb the hill, jolting and rattling.

They crossed the Somme by boat. The weather was calm, cold and clear. The clouds were sheathed in ice. The trees, inverted, having buried their branches in the earth, plunged their roots into the sky. The sun was red, like a ruby set in the ring of the skies. Everything had stopped, stood motionless; everything save this mysterious Somme, the one thing in nature which continued to live and flow, scaly and changeable, like a great fish.

Joan, sitting on the bench to starboard, considered this magical spectacle, controlled by the white laws of winter; this landscape which lay as if congealed, frozen in its wooden frame. She was very pale. She munched a crust of bread with a great air of meditation. The water was lapping against the boat with a hard intermittent sound, like the beating of a heart. Fish were shining at the surface, agile and clean. Joan pictured her life as being like this water, henceforth abandoned to motion, drift, flow. She opened her soul to this grave element, this river which marched with the pace

of destiny. It was one of those moments when man feels the brotherhood of all creation, when the heart is confided to beings and things; one of those moments when love and friendship mingle. The little fish were swimming, with agile tails; intact, insensible, mineral. They had a human air. One felt a desire to address them, "Brothers, my brothers." And Joan, crumbling her bread, began to distribute the crumbs, slowly, generously, smiling, with the gesture of children, and virgins, and angels. . . .

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

A Magnificent Trial!

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A Magnificent Trial!

CAUCHON was rubbing his hands. "What a magnificent trial!" he said.

He had his eyes on the archbishopric. This trial, there was reason to hope, would procure him the See of Rouen.

On her arrival in the city, late in November, Joan had been thrown into one of the darkest dungeons of the old Château. It was a little square room under the ground. A dull light came trickling in, through the narrow grating. The walls were dank, the air foul. The dungeon stank of urine, carbonic acid and putrefaction.

In one corner, a pile of filth and straw served as a bed. Beside it, a pail for all purposes of sanitation.

Spider webs, immense frescos, hung from the beams in broad folds, crawling with in-

sects. Sometimes the webs would undulate in the shadows, making strange and mortuary coils. Or a bat the colour of the moon, with sticky wings, would cross the cell diagonally in one swoop. Sleek, glistening rats, bristling with teeth and tails, went trotting over the black and greasy soil. During her meals they would approach Joan familiarly, with the insolence of soldiers. There they would squat, in a circle, glaring with all their little reddish eyes, smelling with all their scarlet noses, listening with all their sharp ears. They would beg for crumbs of bread and slivers of bone; quarrel over the smallest scrap, abandon themselves to diabolic joys and memorable battles. Suddenly they would decamp in a single mass, green and vile among the shadows, with their billions of feet.

All the genera and species of gnawing things were there. By the side of the rats, the parasitic insects. This friable earth, this decayed straw (and also, doubtlessly, the filth and proximity of the English soldiers) favoured their reproduction. The Maid was infested with lice.

THE OLD CHÂTEAU OF ROUEN IN 1525

During her trial, Joan was imprisoned in the great tower, shown in the foreground.

(From the Municipal Library of Rouen)

In the dungeon, her hands and feet were ironed. Furthermore, at night, they chained her to a great stake planted in the centre of the room.

She was guarded by five English soldiers, chosen from the redoubtable company of the *Houspilleurs*, or Skinners. One of them always, turn by turn, was charged never to leave her with his eyes. Slits and peepholes were fashioned in the walls, so that her guard could watch her from every side.

On February 21, the Maid appeared for the first time before the Tribunal. It sat above her dungeon in the royal chapel, which glowed with tapers and saints. The air reeked of priests and incense. The Bishop of Beauvais presided, in his great red chasuble, gripping his mitre. Around him were grouped the forty-two assessors, men of learning and of law, among them twenty doctors of theology. The spectacle was extraordinarily imposing. These grave doctors in their robes of drugget and ermine, these judges in fur bonnets, these crosses and parchments, tragic properties, this atmosphere of ecclesiastical pomp and canon law:—

all helped to overwhelm the senses and the soul.

Facing this solemn Tribunal, a girl of nineteen.

"Defendant, rise. What is your name?"

"They called me Jeannette in the village; Joan in France."

"What did your Voices say?"

"That I should be gay and daring!"

Gay and daring! Facing this assemblage of clever and learned men, of celebrated theologians, of scholastic philosophers and eloquent clerks, Joan would be gay and daring. She won her battles with these two words. With these two weapons she troubled the erudition of her judges, spreading confusion through all their clever stratagems.

Gay and daring! Gay and daring at Les Tournelles, gay and daring at Patay, gay and daring at Rouen: all Joan's character is there.

I believe that in the modern world there is a profound need for the simple doctrines of the Maid. In all domains, in the arts as in life, whether it is a question of the fundamentals of metaphysics or of simple problems

of money:—man, be gay and daring! Hate is evil, strife is evil, death is evil; the depravities of pleasure are sad and the alcohols of civilization lead to stupor. Be simple; be gay and daring; in this course lies joy, the ample joy of mind and senses.

For Joan to be gay was a difficult virtue. She was surrounded with ambushes and ignominies of every sort. She was deprived of mass and confession. One day, under pretext of elucidating the question of her chastity, matrons were sent, charged with examining her body. During the ceremony a disgusting character—the Duke of Bedford himself—hidden in the shadows was staring like an owl—or a swine.

And still worse! When the brutality of her guards, the *Houspilleurs*, stopped short of violence, the English knights added their efforts. Before burning the Maid, she must perforce be violated. "*La Pucelle lui révéla qu'on l'avait battue et déchoullée, et qu'un millourt d'Angleterre l'avait forcée*—The Maid re-

vealed that she had been beaten sore and stripped of her clothes, and that an English milord had forced her."

This body glowing with ardour, this fresh mind, were little by little broken by such abuse. Joan was disintegrating. She was being attacked through her conscience. They called her a Saracen, an infidel. They threatened her with Hell. Already she began to think of death. "I do now believe that I am in great peril of death."

On Holy Friday she fell sick. Easter day she was delirious. Five hundred bells in Rouen were pealing together. The gambolling of nature, the juices of the spring, the beloved sun, all were illustrating and accompanying the Resurrection of the Saviour. Easter, as frisky as a lamb, as fragrant as ripe fruit, was broadly scattering its perfumes and its wings.

Even in her dungeon, Joan could feel this frantic joy, hear the happy voices of the children marching to their first communion, conjecture the white softness of the air. She alone was denied a share in the universal joy; she

alone was banished from the Easter gladness of the world. She tossed on her pallet, burning with fever. The rattle of death came from her panting throat. In successive spasms ice and fire went coursing through her body. She was repeating, in her delirium:

"The bells! The bells! Long live the bells!"

However, on the following day, the English became alarmed. For death to ravish Joan from their vengeance did not belong in their plans. Warwick went through the halls repeating, "The King goes ill!"

They nursed her, as fowls are fattened for the table. She recovered her health, but not completely, for her physical and moral constitution, the very foundations of her being, were profoundly shaken. All her body could feel the fire.

As soon as she was on her feet, though she still tottered, they applied the "question." It was essential for England that Joan should acknowledge the falsity of her Voices. It was essential that she should be judged a witch. Condemned for witchcraft, her sentence would

imply the guilt of Charles VII, the guilt of France. The rest, the stake and faggots, were only accessory; they followed as a matter of course. She was led to the torture chamber. When she saw the machinery of torture, these smooth cold instruments arranged in shining rows, the young woman melted into tears. Ferociously they applied the "boot"; they stretched her on the rack. The walls dripped with tears. It seemed that the very tower was quaking with shame. Vain torments, ah, vain judges!

Joan murmured in a breath:

"If the body dies, I pray that you bury it in holy ground!"

The Tribunal was beginning to despair. The girl was pig-headed. Cauchon was grumbling. It became necessary to strike a decisive blow.

This exhausted girl, this simple child of the soil, would doubtless be unable to resist the terrible charm of the Admonestation. And so the solemn spectacle was prepared. "Joan," read the decree, "shall be admonished even to the third monition."

This theatrical scene took place on May 24. It was played in the Cemetery of Saint-Ouen, against a dramatic background of open graves and tombstones. The stench of rottenness rose from this black earth, gorged with death. The plagues of annihilation, the gad-flies of immobility peopled the atmosphere. Everything smelt of stone, corpses, worms.

Two scaffolds covered with red velvet were erected on a little mound among the cypress trees. On one of them sat the Tribunal in its full strength: the Cardinal Bishop of Winchester; the Bishop of Beauvais, president; the Grand Inquisitor in his golden cowl; the bishops of Thérouanne, Noyon and Norwich; finally the throng of assessors in their crimson skull-caps and robes the colour of blood.

The other scaffold was empty.

Joan appeared, escorted by her red Englishmen. Slowly, in the midst of her guards, she climbed the steps of the empty platform. A thick sun, a sun of the North, made rust-red blotches on the great ecclesiastical dignitaries, on the cuirasses, the sepulchres, the mitres.

The trumpets blew slowly, drowned in a sort of sonorous oil.

Joan sat in her place on the scaffold, surrounded by a swarm of scribes, notaries and soldiers.

Before her eyes, in the foreground, stood two characters of tragedy: to the right, in an eternal white surplice, was the preaching friar charged with pronouncing the Admonestation; to the left, standing on his dirty cart, in a doublet of scarlet cloth, the hangman. . . .

The spectacle, indeed, was extraordinarily impressive. There, in a mortuary confusion, stood mausoleums, and evil trees, and princes of the world, all leagued together to terrify a child! This child, pale, thin, her hands already losing their flesh, was watching the landscape of vile men from the summit of her heart.

The heart is still the highest vantage-point from which to survey the earth.

Meanwhile the preacher, Brother Érard, began his sermon from the depth of his great sleeves. Sometimes terrible and sometimes unctuous, adopting now the tone of the nightingale, and now of the vulture, he admonished,

menaced, besought, insulted, sneered, by dint of outbursts and gestures, all sweaty and bombastic, hell in his eye and spittle in his throat. He pointed to the hangman, with the long nail of his index finger; he raised his voice on tiptoe; then suddenly he sank to his knees, almost in tears, crying with joined hands: "Joan, Joan, take pity on thyself!" A horrible comedy, horrible both in movement and in passion.

At intervals the whole Tribunal would chorus, in a loud Gregorian chant:

"Joan, Joan, abjure, abjure, abjure!"

Soon even the crowd was taking part in this fantastic dispute. Women perched on the gravestones were shaking their fists at the too-mild Cauchon. Soldiers, behind the scenes, drew their swords, grumbling. The hangman stood alone on his pale cart and stroked his beard, leisurely, with a satanic smile.

Joan's ears were full of this word "abjuration." The cries, the red bishops, the crowd thirsting for blood, all were besieging her senses. Little by little her weakness turned into vertigo. She was tearing her hair, twist-

ing her mouth; her soul was on fire. And the preacher repeated:

"Thou shalt be burned, thou shalt be burned!"

Beside her the crouching notaries murmured against her legs: Abjure! abjure! The crowd was in a frenzy. Cauchon began to fear for his life; he was being heaped with insults and green apples. He rose and turned to Joan: Abjure! abjure! The bells were ringing, stuttering in their pathos: Abjure! abjure! The horses of the soldiers reared and whinnied. The hangman, the motionless hangman, murmured with a shiver: Abjure!

And Joan, drained of her blood and reason, stammered:

"I abjure. . . ."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Anthology

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Anthology

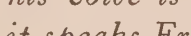
NOTHING can give a more striking picture of Joan, or a better analysis of her personality, than a simple, undated, unordered enumeration of a few of her sayings.

The good sense, freshness, density, accent and turn of her language—which, on my word, remind you of Pascal—are worthy of the finest pages in French literature.

God helps those who help themselves.

The English in England; these are my terms of peace.

The Voice: *This voice is clear and sweet and humble, and it speaks French.*



Was St. Michael naked?—*Do you think that God had nought to clothe him with?*

As for women's duties, there will be many other women to perform them.

And had I a hundred fathers and a hundred mothers, still I would have gone.

I will go if I have to wear my feet to the knees.

I told them to enter boldly among the English, and there I entered myself.

In God's name, the soldiers will do battle, and God will give the victory.

Does God hate the English?—*I know nothing of the love or hate that God bears to the*

English, but well I know that they will all be smitten out of France, except for those who perish there.

Are you in a state of grace?—*If I am not, may God bring me there; if I am, may God keep me there!*

One of their chief reproaches, and nearly the most absurd, was that of her wearing men's garments.—*For the question of clothes, it is a small matter, the smallest of the small.* (Compare this with "Clothes do not make the man.")

When she was threatened with torture—*Should you tear off my limbs and cause the soul to depart from my body, I would tell you nothing more; and if I told you something more, afterwards I would always repeat that you made me say it by force.*

Time weighs on me heavily, as on a woman in the pains of birth.

Joan of Arc

Poor people were glad to come to me.

Never did I see blood that my hair did not rise with horror.

Of her banner—*It had shared in the travail, and to share in the honour was only just.*

The great pity which was the realm of France.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Stake

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Stake

"I ABJURE. . . ." Joan had fallen on the scaffold in a faint. They carried her back to prison, while the Tribunal discussed the terms of her sentence and the red mob intoned the Carmagnole.

As soon as she regained consciousness, she was terrified by her abjuration. She demanded to see Cauchon. Straining up from her bed of straw, she screamed:

"No, no, my Voices did not deceive me! My Voices were from God!"

But henceforth nothing could be changed. The English now had what they wanted: a public abjuration. Fire and the stake would settle the rest.

During the night, while Joan was proclaiming the truth of her Voices, Cauchon had been occupied by the wording of the official condemnation. As for the English soldiers, they

were collecting faggots for the following morning.

The stake had been planted in the square of the Old Rouen Market, the fish-market. It was now eight o'clock in the morning. May had proved mild and sweet, a female month. A brand-new sun was climbing the foamy horizon, and the milk of all Normandy was scattered through the sky, in broad creamy patches. The air smelt of apples, boats and salt.

The marketing was over for the day, and the planks and tarpaulins of the market-booths were being hastily removed. On the ground, in the fetid gutters, lay fish-heads or heaps of mussels: the garbage of the sea. And great incommensurable sweepers were washing the square already, with water in abundance, with gestures in abundance.

A little shop, half-tavern and half-bordel, stood at the end of the marketplace. There the hangman was leaning against the bar, his sleeves rolled back on his arms, sipping a glass of white wine.

JOAN AT THE STAKE

From a miniature drawn in 1584. The artist has diminished the height of the pyre, which was made exceptionally lofty, as the records state, "so that her torture might be prolonged."

(From a miniature in the Bibliothèque Nationale)

About 8:10 a few of the authorities began to arrive, along with soldiers and the special police. Soon the first urchins wandered in. Cauchon made a tour of inspection, then disappeared. Little by little a crowd was gathering from every direction. Doves were smoothing their wings on all the roofs.

On the stroke of nine, the Maid was brought to the scene, riding in a tumbril.

It was a square pyre, built of apple faggots. Joan, in a shift and kirtle, her feet bare, stepped down from the tumbril; she turned to glance at the crowd. In the front rank she recognized Cauchon by his mitre and crozier. To him Joan cried:

"Bishop, I die because of you!"

Now the hangman began winding cords, cords. Soldiers were coming and going, laughing silently. Sparrows chirped in the May sky.

A clerk of court, tangled in his long sleeves and documents, began to mumble the sentence of death. The forty-two assessors fell

to signing parchments. Then, at a given signal, the hangman seized Joan by the arms.

He pushed and hoisted her to the summit of the pyre, urging her roughly across the faggots. Joan abandoned herself; she was blind, unconscious, a package of death. Soldiers lent their hands, backs and shoulders to aid in their ascent.

At the top of the pyre, Joan recovered her senses. She glanced down and saw a morning-glory, caught in one of the faggots at her feet. She felt pity for the flower, and did not wish it to perish in the flames. Leaning forward, she plucked it, kissed it, then held it out to the hangman:

"Save it! Don't let it burn!"

He took the flower, chuckling, and pinned it to his jerkin. Then he began to bind Joan to the stake, whistling, grunting, tightening the cords. Finally he hung a great placard about her neck, with the following inscription scrawled in rude letters:

"JOAN
WHO CALLS HERSELF THE MAID OF ORLÉANS
IDOLATRESS, SORCERESS, BRAGGART, WANTON

EVILDOER, SOURCE OF FALSEHOODS, CORRUPTRESS OF THE PEOPLE
SUPERSTITIOUS, PRESUMPTUOUS AND CRUEL
BLASPHEMERESS OF GOD, TRAITRESS TO THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST
IN LEAGUE WITH SATAN
APOSTATE, RELAPSED, SCHISMATIC, HERETIC."

The hangman climbed down. Joan of Arc was alone at the summit of the pyre, alone on the heights!

Ah! Joan, Joan, clad in all the splendour of your destiny, you have reached the end and climax of your rôle. You rise, on your high platform, in your long white shift, a lonely figure against the sky. Your two bare feet are odorous and virginal, and burst on the horizon of my pen like two pink dawns. Your heart is warmer than the flames. You bend a little forward from your gorgeous hips, while the hair of a daughter of Lorraine, blonde with the glow of beer and the tints of chastity, lies scattered over your secret shoulders. And now, through the cloth of your gown, I can finally glimpse all the fragile beauty of your

body: the rounded heights of your full thighs, and the establishment of the navel, and the fall of the belly, and the redemption of your breast. Ah! Maid, Maid of my heart, little creature of fresh body and good sense, girl, little girl:—the tears are standing in my eyes, and all because you are nineteen . . . nineteen!

It is a moment only since these grained and oval breasts commenced to swell; since the breath of womanhood first dilated your four-and-twenty ribs; since you began to glimpse the early signs of Life on the rosy heights; only a moment, and already the time has come when your intact body must be dissolved, so that its ashes may rest forever in the memory of man. Ah! whoever has a manly heart, let him not dissemble his tears before your pyre! You inspire me from your platform of faggots, little creature in flames, more than all the sensuality of all the world. Your white form goes drifting through my imagination. You fill me with pride, and you engender the wildest delights in my mind. Yes, you reign over the English crowd, but

you reign still more firmly over my heart. Your eyes stare into the depths of my soul. Your lips are silent, yet my ears are ringing with the sound of your voice. I know and acknowledge you, O woman, O sister, from the first of your dawns even to the last. And these flames, and this black-hearted bishop (things created for each other), and all the rest—these soldiers the colour of carrots, these horses of Satan, this dirty unshaven hangman, even death—what do they matter, little sister, since you live in me, and I in you, and since the pages of this book shall preserve us both eternally in one ink and one body!

From the top of her pyre, Joan considered the spectacle of the city and the crowd. It was one of those moments of pathetic silence, of silence heavy with death, which precede a great catastrophe. Below, in the marketplace, soldiers were rushing about in their red cloaks, queer and foreshortened. There were monks in brownish-purple cowls reciting paternosters. Young pink-coiffed women laughing

with their beaux. Green and red youngsters playing one-old-cat in the corner, waiting for the performance to begin. Horses snorting. Cries and military commands mingling criss-cross. A little old man with a white beard, standing in the front row of the audience, and breakfasting tranquilly on a round of sausage.

But Joan, from above, went soaring over the crowd. She existed on a superior plane, on a level with the high places of the world: the roofs of the houses, the tops of the trees. The steeples stared her in the face and the sky was around her, inside her. Her glances roamed over the city, with its thousand Gothic churches covered with lace, like brides; with its pointed gables sucked by the lips of the wind; with its towers made of needles, its fabulous stone embroidery, its jewels of art and humanity. The air had grown mild, tender and mild. A few clouds laden with milk were rustling over the steeples laden with gold. The breeze was delicate as a virgin's breath. The municipal trees were rocking gently under their load of leaves. In a word, the day was lovely as only May weather can

be. Amorous sparrows went vaulting from one elm tree to another, or rushing in a whirlwind round and round the pyre. One of them, as curled and insolent as a courtier, perched himself on Joan's head, among her hair the colour of ripe wheat. And Joan smiled, happy for a bird. . . .

At this moment the hangman kindled the fire.

From above, Joan saw him, and seized with a sudden terror, she cried:

"Rouen, Rouen, art thou to be my last abode!"

The fire climbed from one faggot to another, licking, crawling, mean, implacable. Like modern warfare it advanced toward limited objectives by short bounds, by saps, by funnels. Sometimes a sudden leap toward the prey. . . .

By now Joan was writhing in torment. The flesh of her shrank before the sacrifice. "Alas! alas!" she cried, "and must my whole body, my virgin body, be burned to ashes! Ah! rather I were beheaded seven times!" But immediately her spirit overcame, dominated

the flesh. "Yes, yes," she cried in louder tones, "my Voices were from God, my Voices did not deceive me! Glory to Jesus! Glory to God!"

A thick, white, heavy smoke was mounting in suffocating columns. Suddenly, the first tongues of fire came licking Joan's feet. This first contact with the flames, half tickle and half burn, made her hair rise with horror. The tongues of fire, growing longer and longer, more and more numerous, were now prowling about her body, slyly, as a tiger circles round a goat before it springs. Sparks were falling on her face, on her belly. Her feet were roasting. A horrible odour of burned flesh, of burned human flesh, caught Joan by the throat, and this odour was stronger than any pain. Already her kirtle was in flames. The placard, with its strings glowing, fell into the fire. Her shift was now burning up to the knees. Suddenly Joan perceived her bare knees, bare in the sight of ten thousand men. Her thighs were showing already. Then, the real torture began. Forgetting fire, torture and death, Joan thought only of her modesty,

her virgin modesty. She was afraid of the fire because it was baring her body. A spark fell on her throat. The cloth caught fire and her breast slipped out, the lovely breast of a tall country girl. Below her the soldiers were nudging one another. "Look, look!" They began to chuckle. And the foul crowd was staring, with swinish eyes, at this spectacle of a virgin laid bare. Horrors! the thighs are naked to the waist. A spark set fire to her hair, and the high mass of it flamed up magnificently, then crumbled about her ears and shoulders, fell in black ashes across her bosom. Now her other breast was laid bare. All the old men in the crowd were feasting their eyes on these pink breasts, pricked with black burns. Joan grew desperate. Her eyes rolled emptily in their burned lashes. Ah, ah, she was naked before ten thousand men, ten thousand peeping Toms! Making a supreme effort, she broke the cords which bound her arms. With her free hands, ah! those poor roasted hands, reddened with blood and fire, she struggled against the flames; no, against her nakedness. She hid her legs with frag-

ments of cloth, plastered her breast with bits of cord. But the flame was stealing it all, rag by rag, thread by thread. Obstinately she covered herself with morsels of burned fabric, with blackened embers; in spite of her efforts the flame swallowed everything. Then, she crossed her long arms over her body in a final attitude . . . But now it was physical agony, the agonies of hell, which submerged this woman, submerged everything. She tried once more to cross her legs; the fire relaxed muscles and members. She was twisting in convulsive spasms. Little by little she was losing all strength, all feeling. Her thighs were burning. Her breasts were burning. Her ears were burning. Her arms were burning. The white virgin was now only a black torch. She repeated, by starts, in the midst of great sighs, "Jesus . . . Mary . . . My God . . . My God. . . ." At this moment the last cord which bound her to the stake fell into ashes. Joan tottered as if drunk, a sort of charred bacchante, naked and flayed, clawed by the nails of Satan. In a wild relaxation of her nerves she stretched out

her arms; they were rigid and terrible. One fearfully unstable moment she remained in this position. Then she crumbled into the glowing coals.

Meanwhile, in the marketplace, a sort of panic was taking possession of the crowd. One by one the assessors rose precipitately from their seats, forgot their dignity and scampered off. The birds were still. A prodigious silence, the silence of hell, reigned over the mob. The Cardinal Bishop of Winchester had tears in his eyes. Dozens of women rolled and sobbed on the ground. "Ten thousand men were weeping." Even Cauchon himself pulled a handkerchief from his pocket, but never a tear could he find.

The hangman, poking in the ashes, discovered Joan's heart; it was still intact. He stirred the embers and threw the heart into the flames, but all in vain. Joan's heart was incombustible. The hangman grew ashamed and furious. He covered it with oil and sulphur. Vain, vain: the heart remained fresh

and pink. Then, in mad desperation, he ran and threw it into the Seine.

The crowd dispersed, panting, with long steps, fleeing this shameful place. Soldiers and priests ran helter-skelter. The monks drew back, crossing themselves. The English Cardinal turned tail and galloped off, crying madly through the city:

"We are lost, all is lost, we have burned a Saint!"

THE END

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